

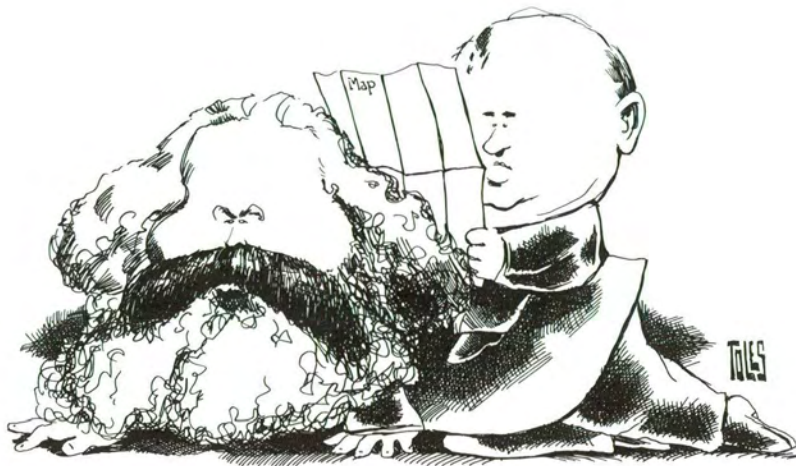
Free Inquiry

Summer 1989

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The Future of Marxism **An interview with Sidney Hook**



The Humanistic Guru

*Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh
and Robert H. Rimmer
respond to critics*

Mechanic of Death: The Case of "Ivan the Terrible"

*Joe Nickell
John P. Fischer*

**Also: In Praise of Blasphemy • Church and State in Ireland
Abortion vs. Adoption • Humanism in the Black Community**

A special invitation to you to become a
Charter Associate Member
of the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism

Dear Subscriber:

We invite you to become a Charter Associate Member of the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism (CODESH).

Next year will mark the tenth anniversary of the founding of CODESH, the nonprofit educational organization that publishes *FREE INQUIRY* magazine. CODESH was created in 1980 in response to the unrelenting attacks on secular humanism issued by religious fundamentalists. In our view there was no adequate forum for defending secularism and demonstrating the values of humanism. We decided to take on the challenge of forming one.

Secular humanism is an authentic and positive way of life that provides ethical guidelines for a good and meaningful existence independent of religion. *FREE INQUIRY* has consistently upheld the view that humanism is not a religion, and that we can nourish authentic ethical values without relying on dogmatic absolutes allegedly handed down by a transcendent being. *FREE INQUIRY* has been effective in responding to the intemperate criticisms of secular humanism.

CODESH also believes, however, that it is time to set off in new directions—not simply to defend ourselves to our critics, but to demonstrate by word and deed the viability of a thoroughly secular, humanistic way of life. Secular humanists often feel isolated in their communities, surrounded by a culture so saturated with religious symbols and dogma that it alienates those who do not believe and allows them few outlets for independence and dissent. Many readers tell us that *FREE INQUIRY* and CODESH provide them with a vital lifeline to others who share their secularist outlook.

Two years ago, CODESH helped to initiate the formation of local and regional secular humanist groups throughout North America. These groups have grown rapidly in both size and number, and have provided important networks for those interested in humanistic pursuits. They have sponsored lectures, provided meeting places for social get-togethers, and initiated projects that have put them in the vanguard of the new grassroots humanist movement. We believe it is time to further the growth of the awareness of humanism, and to strengthen the bonds by providing a solid basis for identity with a dynamic national secular humanist organization.

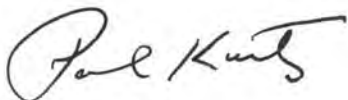
That is why we are inviting you to become a **Charter Associate Member** of CODESH. We believe it is important to establish a thoroughly *secular* network that creates a tie of fellowship between like-minded individuals and groups nationwide and throughout the world, and that defines and clarifies the humanist movement. But we can succeed only if we work together to emphasize the importance of values based on science and reason—values that will enhance our lives in the here and now and allow us to become all that we are capable of being.

For only \$15 a year (\$25 for families), Charter Associate Members will receive the *Secular Humanist Community Report*, which details the activities of local and regional secular humanist groups, and the *Robert Ingersoll Report*, which is committed to reviving the memory of this great nineteenth-century freethinker. In addition, you'll receive a **10 percent discount** on the registration fees for *FREE INQUIRY* conferences and seminars, on *FREE INQUIRY* audiotapes and videotapes, and on a select list of books that have grown out of the activities of *FREE INQUIRY* and CODESH. Each Charter Associate Member will also receive a personalized wallet-size membership card.

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Won't you join us today? We look forward to your participation.

Sincerely,



Paul Kurtz

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Letters to the Editor

Eupraxophy and human nature

Paul Kurtz's notion of eupraxophy (Editorials, Spring 1989) stands in a long and noble tradition. In my heart I agree with him, but my head tells me that "human nature" (at least as we know it) just isn't up to this: Look at the Rushdie affair in Iran, the war on drugs here, religious strife in Israel and Ireland, and on and on. People love to hate too much; and *that*, I think, is what religion is all about: legitimizing hatred.

Thomas S. Szasz, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry
SUNY Medical School
Syracuse, New York

Religious "morality"

The articles on morality in the Spring issue got me to thinking about the morality of God. A case in point is the story of Job, who loved God with all his heart and was righteous and upright. However, Satan accused Job of loving God because of all the blessings that Job had received; so, to prove a point, God allowed Satan to tempt Job in every conceivable way. This is like allowing your enemy to kill your friend's children, destroy his job, and infect him with a disease, and expect your friend to still consider you a friend. In a modern court of law God would be punished for being an accessory to high crimes.

What is it called when one has the power to stop a crime but does not? What is it called when one has the power to stop evil, yet allows it to happen? Is it ethical to be aware that a murder is going to take place and not do anything about it? Is it ethical to know that your neighbor is going to have his crops destroyed and not raise a hand to help him? Is it ethical to allow your neighbor to be infected with a dreadful disease? This is how Job was treated by God.

If there is any moral to the story of Job, it is that God is not ethical, merciful, just, or moral. When someone has the power, the knowledge, and the ability to stop a crime and yet refuses to do so, that person is as guilty as the criminal. And even though God rewarded Job in the end with twice as much as he had had before, this did not bring back

his loved ones, nor did it compensate for the mental and physical suffering that Job endured for no other reason than to soothe God's ego.

Lodella Welker
Scottsdale, Ariz.

I really enjoyed the recent articles on morality. Instead of allowing people to question my morality because I am not a traditional believer, I frequently beat them at their own game by stating very clearly that the morality of the Bible shocks my sensibilities and I have no intention of living by its moral code. I do not believe in owning slaves, as is sanctioned in the Old and New Testaments. I do not believe in the degradation of women or that the proper punishment for adultery is stoning. I don't believe in racism or that there is a "chosen people," or that blacks were cursed by God because the drunkard Noah thought it was a good idea. I don't believe in the slaughter of innocent animals to appease an angry God. I can't possibly see the morality in requiring an innocent human sacrifice to atone for our sins. I don't call that righteousness—I call it murder.

It is said that Lot was a "righteous" man who was willing to offer his virgin daughters to be raped in order to protect a couple of God's angels. It seems to me that the angels were in a far better position to protect themselves than were Lot's virgin daughters, and I would rather die than allow any of my daughters to be abused in this way. But, you see, I'm not of the religious sort who can rationalize such behavior. The Bible is filled with tales of God's people and their crimes of murder, adultery, theft, cheating, and lies. When people spout off about the Bible's morality, I suggest to them that they read it before making any such assumption.

Gaila Noble
Phoenix, Ariz.

For many years I have been thoroughly disgusted with the grandeur, the physical trappings, and the gobbledegook of organized religion. It has always seemed to me that the powers that be in the religious community are taking unfair advantage of

the gullibility and fears of their followers. The unending threats of everlasting doom to all those who do not heel obediently are stomach-turning. I realized early that the only power these charlatans wield is the power given them by the ignorance that is taught by parents as well as by the church.

Why is it that the only visions of miraculous sightings are those of ignorant, religious, peasant hysterics such as Bernadette Soubirous? And the only persons who are "cured" at their shrines are equally religious members of the same faith? Why doesn't Mary or the infant Jesus miraculously appear to a Jew or a Muslim, or better yet, to an atheist?

I remember watching a news telecast once of a religious convention that was taking place in Las Vegas. The boob who was being interviewed kept maintaining that all persons who did not believe as he did were "goin' straight to hell"—of course, this included all the world's Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and so on. When asked by the interviewer about persons who died in infancy, persons born before Christ, aboriginal persons who had never heard of Christ, and others, the answer in each case was a very smug, "Goin' straight to hell." Who needs religion like that?

I suppose that religion has its place among the poorly informed. The Las Vegas boob appeared to be quite happy in his abysmal ignorance.

Martin Pepper
Los Angeles, Calif.

Aren't they amazing? I refer, of course, to the people who insist that we must abandon our disbelief, as if it were a bad habit, like smoking or nail-biting. Is it possible that they think one can *choose* to believe a myth? Isn't one of the requisites of certain religions a voluntary suspension of disbelief? I find that perverse.

Christians, when faced with the theory of the Big Bang, ask where the material for the explosion came from. If you ask those people where God came from, they reply that he was always there, "there" being everywhere. Sounds like a cop-out to me. They like to quote, "Before Adam was, I am." That's pure gibberish, but a child, hearing it sonorously intoned, feels stupid for not understanding. The fact is, children can be made to believe in Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy. When we grow up, we begin to think reasonably. At least, some of us do.

Diane Silver
Arleta, Calif.

Abortion and secular centrists

Because in my opinion abortion is really a church/state issue, the political effort to force the views of the antiabortion zealots onto the whole country is a matter over which humanists should be concerned.

Unfortunately, we don't yet have a clear choice on the matter: Most people vote for a Democrat or a Republican; they do not vote prochoice or "prolife," much less proreligion or secular.

The polls keep showing that 70 percent of Americans are prochoice, but Republicans who oppose abortion continue to win elections, as in the case of Bush and Quayle. The apparent discrepancy likely results from the fact that around 40 percent of eligible voters don't vote at all. Probably most of these are *secular centrists*: They aren't going to vote for a democratic party made up of a collection of socialists, Catholics, Baptists, and so on, just because its candidates are more likely than the typical Republican candidates to be prochoice.

If we had a Secular Centrist Party in each state, many of those who now sit on the sidelines during elections but express opinions to poll-takers would again have something to vote for. The groups favoring free choice would do well to help organize such a party instead of turning to the Democrats again. There is no reason that civil libertarians should ever have been in bed with the leftists, since the latter favor governmental controls on almost everything. This is a good time to break that old connection by creating a third political party.

Charles M. Selby
Christmas Valley, Ore.

Chill out

Carol Kahn (Spring 1989) addresses the issue of population growth brought on by life extension with the statement, "Many areas of the world are currently uninhabited. Canada is one of the largest land masses in the world and has a population of just twenty-two million." Of course, when we're done with Canada, perhaps we can tear down a few rain forests and drain some more wetlands to make way for the growing numbers.

Assuming we survive the resultant ecological catastrophe, we will eventually have to stop having children. The lack of youth would probably cause stagnation in world culture.

Of course in four billion years the sun is going to Nova, so our four-billion-year-

old bodies had better find a way out of here. After that, though, the protons in our bodies will begin to decay, or else we'll be consumed in the Big Crunch.

Like it or not, physical immortality is impossible. There may be a spiritual immortality, but proof of its existence eludes us. We would do better to accept death as a part of life, and utilize our resources to improve the world for those who are destined to be here less than a century.

Peter McKnight
Norwalk, Conn.

Carol Kahn's article on immortality is the polemic of a hopeful believer, not the reportage of a disinterested journalist.

Leaving aside the practical scientific considerations that make cloning and cryonics impossible, let us examine the philosophical aspects of these technologies.

Kahn asserts that cheap cryonics will offer life extension not only to the wealthy, but to everyone. But what of the quality of life for the living? Should we freeze only the old and sick among the poor and destitute? Or would it be more ethical to freeze the children of poverty, that they might escape the detriments of malnutrition? Who would care for them upon defrosting? Must we freeze all the hungry families of the world until we learn how to distribute food equitably? How many of the earth's poor billions shall we freeze? What socioeconomic criterion shall we use? Should only the wealthy and the poor be frozen, leaving the middle class to live out their natural lives?

What about abuse? Shall we promise the poor cryonic transportation to a hungerless future, only to have some tyrant or legislature pull the plug to dispose of them? How will the frozen exercise their democratic rights? Or should they remain essentially without civil rights for the duration of their solidity? What of the resources we devote to preserving the frozen?

What of those who stay unfrozen? Kahn mentions birth control, which surely would not only be wise, but mandatory. The right of reproductive self-determination must go so as to conserve space for the frozen. And what jobs will go undone, what discoveries will go unfound, because of the time and effort devoted to the cryonics industry?

Finally, we must ask the fundamental ethical question of life extension: Why should we want to live longer?

One's personal experience, if one attends to it creatively, is one's highest value. To that end, longer life is valuable, and no one thinks we should dispose of the medical science and public hygiene that have given

us greater life expectancies.

But a large portion of our valued experiences are those we share with our families and friends. If people travel into the far future by being frozen, they cut themselves off from the possibility of ever sharing an experience with their loved ones again. Are the friends I may make upon thawing adequate replacements for the family and friends I now abandon?

I think not. Everyone is a product of time and place; to abscond into the deep freeze is to abdicate all of one's social responsibilities and to forsake all of one's social values. One's career and other personal and social values would forever be lost. I cannot imagine an argument compelling enough to make me do it.

I don't understand why we should devote time and effort to the problematic goals of exotic life-extension technologies, particularly when there are urgent problems still affecting large numbers of persons. I believe it would be far more productive to devote human talent and effort to the solution of the problems of AIDS, hunger, displacement, entrenched enmity, oppression, and the erosion of reason in the latter half of the twentieth century, for example.

Fred Condo Jr.
San Dimas, Calif.

I have no yearning to be frozen and thawed out in a later century. At seventy-six I have enough difficulty adjusting to rock music and the magic land of the computer.

As each new rock edition seems more horrible than the last, I shudder to think what might await me in the year 2089.

Bob Hanks
Hackettstown, N.J.

Dear "Name Withheld" . . .

The last issue of FREE INQUIRY included a letter in which you told of your decision to keep the magazine out of the sight of your clients, as your business partner had requested.

No one should presume to criticize your decision. People may not live by bread alone, but they certainly can't live without it.

But how should the rest of us react to this reminder that, in many quarters, secular humanism is not "respectable"? We must remember that both respectability and heresy are decided by history. Two thousand years ago, the average Roman citizen viewed the tiny, dissident Christian cult much as

(Continued on p. 59)

Notes from the Editor

The Prospects for Democratization of Marxism-Leninism

In this issue of *FREE INQUIRY*, the veteran philosopher Sidney Hook grants an exclusive interview, "The Future of Marxism," to Tibor Machan, a noted libertarian philosopher who escaped from Hungary during the Russian invasion.

Sidney Hook has been a lifelong student and critic of the works of Karl Marx. His influential writings on Marxism span more than sixty years and include *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx* (1935), *From Hegel to Marx* (1936), and *The Hero in History* (1943). An enthusiastic supporter of Marxism early in his career, Hook became, by the early 1930s, its most trenchant critic. He was one of the first to point out the infamous blood purges, mass deportations, executions, and show trials that occurred in the Soviet Union at the hands of ruthless dictator Joseph Stalin. At a time when many left-wing liberals were defending the Moscow purge trials and denying the terrorist excesses of Stalin, Hook expressed a heroic and sometimes lonely voice in opposition.

In 1938 he helped to organize a special commission of inquiry, led by the philosopher and educator John Dewey, into the charges leveled by the Stalinist regime against the deposed Leon Trotsky. The commission found Trotsky innocent of these charges, but criticized Trotsky's own non-democratic brand of communism.

After World War II, Hook organized the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a group of intellectuals who sought to counter Stalin's massive propaganda campaign, which portrayed the Soviet Union as a democratic society interested in furthering the ideals of world peace.

Hook consistently maintains that he is a democratic socialist. He emphasizes the centrality of *democracy* to this definition, and argues that political democracy—including a secret ballot, the legal right of opposition, a multiparty system, a free press, the right of dissent, judicial due process, and other civil liberties—is a precondition of any society that claims to be socialistic and/or humanistic.

For many years Hook was slandered as anti-Communist and a right-winger, though all along he had simply defended human

freedom and exposed its betrayal by the Leninist-Stalinist state. This calumny was especially vociferous within the American humanist movement, which is unfortunate because Hook is truly one of the outstanding secular humanist philosophers of twentieth-century America. Yet he was denounced by many left-wing humanists, who for a long time attempted to mute any criticism of the Soviet Union; for example, they condemned the American position in Vietnam, but were reluctant to speak out against the Russian armed suppression of Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

When the Council for *Democratic and Secular Humanism* was founded in 1980, it sought to clearly distinguish humanism from nondemocratic and totalitarian forms of atheism, which are the enemies of human freedom and thus betray the ideals of humanism. The premiere issue of *FREE INQUIRY* contained an article by Sidney Hook entitled "The Ground We Stand On: Democratic Humanism." It made abundantly clear his position as a consistent foe of any sort of dictatorship, and his belief that humanism cannot be compromised with totalitarianism. He wrote: "Aggressive Communist totalitarianism, terroristic nationalism, and militant religious fanaticism [are] all contemptuous of democratic processes, the values of rational humanism, and the integrity of free inquiry."

Today Sidney Hook has been vindicated by history: The Soviet Union has admitted publicly the litany of crimes committed by the Stalinist regime. It is a credit to Gorbachev's policy of glasnost that the most soiled pages of his nation's history have been opened up to public scrutiny. The long-suppressed views of the Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov and others are finally being aired publicly. The Soviet historian Roy Medvedev was recently allowed to voice his opinion that more than twenty million people died during Stalin's reign of terror. Similar charges were leveled by Sidney Hook many years ago, and he was ridiculed in the West by defenders of the Soviet Union.

In this issue's interview Hook is asked to analyze the prospects of Marxism. Perhaps he is too pessimistic; he does not seem to hold out much hope that the first

glimmers of democracy that have emerged in the Soviet Union, Poland, China, and other Communist states will be encouraged or that the winds of freedom will blow more strongly in the future. He points out that it is essential not simply to discredit Stalinism, but, more fundamentally, to invalidate Leninism and the Bolshevik Party, for it was Lenin's defense of the centralized Communist dictatorship that has split the world socialist movement ever since.

All lovers of freedom earnestly hope that Hook is wrong, that these states will become more democratic, and that the surprising democratic changes that have already occurred cannot be turned back. As we go to press the Chinese student movement has exploded. One cannot easily predict what will ensue, but it is clear that true democracy can move forward only when the ruling elites in the Soviet Union, China, and other Communist-bloc countries finally admit that Leninism is mistaken, that no single group should have the authority to maintain absolute control, and that a free society requires the genuine sharing of power. (PK)

In Praise of Blasphemy

After every argument of the church has been answered, has been refuted, then the church cries "Blasphemy." Blasphemy is what an old mistake says of newly discovered truth. Blasphemy is the bulwark of religious prejudice. Blasphemy is the breastplate of the heartless.

—Robert Ingersoll

The efforts to censor *The Satanic Verses* and the Ayatollah Khomeini's public call for the execution of its author, Salman Rushdie, have aroused indignation in the democratic world as few issues have. Though many have expressed their opposition to censorship and their outrage that a price has been placed on the heads of Rushdie and his publishers, some have added a qualification to their protest, claiming that *The Satanic Verses* is in "bad taste" because it "blackens" a classical religion and offends the sensibilities of Muslims.

The *New York Times* recently reported that Cardinal John J. O'Connor, the head of New York City's Roman Catholic diocese, called the book "insulting and insensitive to the Muslim faith." The public, he said, should "not forget the author's attack on Islam, a sacred belief held by hundreds of millions of people." The former president Jimmy Carter echoed these views in an op-ed piece in the March 5 *New York Times*,

in which he said that Rushdie's book is "an insult" to Muslims, and that "we should be sensitive to the concerns and anger that prevail even among the more moderate Muslims." Patrick Buchanan, the popular conservative moderator of CNN's "Crossfire," deplores the "blasphemous" nature of Rushdie's attack.

Contrary to these opinions, I believe that the right to blaspheme is a human right that must be protected in democratic societies; indeed, we have an obligation to submit the claims of religion to criticism, even though this may outrage the faithful. Similar considerations apply to the recent attempt by conservative religionists to ban the film *The Last Temptation of Christ* because it offended the feelings of devout Christians.

This issue is especially vital to secular humanists, who consider the defense of the free mind essential for human freedom to flourish. Any effort to limit blasphemy is an assault on the free society. Toleration not only means the right of pluralistic faiths to exist without repression, but the right of unbelievers to express their dissenting opinions about sacred beliefs, however offensive true believers may find their criticisms.

Islam (which means literally "submission to the will of God") is a rapidly growing religion. The faith professed by devout Muslims does not simply affect the private behavior of individual believers, but plays a powerful public and political role, both in nations where Islam dominates and in other parts of the world. Fanatic terrorists wage jihad, or "holy war," against others, quoting the Koran in the name of Allah. Thus, it is important to question the nature of the writings in the Koran. Were they, as Muslims believe, revealed to the prophet Mohammed through the archangel Gabriel, messenger of Allah? Can they indeed be attributed to a supernatural source, or should they instead be given psychological and naturalistic explanations? Salman Rushdie, as a secularist and humanist, attempts to interpret Mohammed's experience in natural, human terms, and for that he has been condemned as a blasphemer.

There is considerable evidence that Mohammed was either experiencing hallucinations and/or suffered from epilepsy when he had visions and heard voices in the caves of Hira, north of Mecca. During the early years in which Mohammed claimed to experience "revelations," most of the people of Mecca mocked him and thought he was mad. His revelations were subjective and uncorroborated; they were private inner soliloquies. He would fall into a faint and

bleat like a camel; beads of sweat would appear on his brow, and when he came out of his trance-like swoon, he would recite messages from "on high," which were later transcribed by his followers and finally compiled into the Koran (literally, "recitation"). Later in life, Mohammed amassed a huge army and attempted to impose the "will of Allah," conquering vast areas of Arabia. He could turn his revelations on and off like a spigot. He would use them, for example, to justify his taking at least ten wives and concubines. Critical investigators thus can only be skeptical about the alleged divine calling of his prophecies. Mohammed himself condemned blasphemy as the greatest sin, and maintained that those who disagree with his version of Islam—as Salman Rushdie apparently has done—should be put to death.

Of course, the Koran contains eloquent passages and moral poetry that have inspired hundreds of millions of people ever since, and there is a rich historical, philosophical, and intellectual tradition that Islam has cultivated. Islamic scholars have helped to preserve the writings of classical Greece and Rome. Apparently there is a significant minority of Islamic scholars today who yearn for the intellectual freedom to use the best tools of philosophy and science to interpret the Koran—but they are fearful of dissenting.

Islamic countries cannot hope to enter

into the postmodern world until they allow the free expression of ideas and even heresy and dissent. Islam needs to undergo the kind of Enlightenment that occurred in the West, where the principles of free inquiry and the separation of church and state are respected. Islamic nations cannot hope to advance unless their people are allowed to discuss their thoughts freely—even if they disagree with the supernaturalistic interpretation of the Koran and believe instead that it was written by human beings to satisfy their existential yearning.

Human rights will be protected in Islamic culture only when it recognizes that true liberty of thought and conscience includes the right of unbelief and the right to blaspheme. Skeptics have an obligation to bring to bear the best critical scholarship in examining the origins of the Koran (as biblical criticism has done in the West)—even if it offends the sensibilities of Muslims or other religionists. The secular revolution so urgently needed in Muslim lands can only occur when the life of Mohammed—like those of Jesus, Moses, and other religious prophets—can be submitted to critical scrutiny, and when free thought can be expressed without fear or intimidation.

And so we raise our voices in praise of blasphemy. The right to blaspheme is a human right; it is an essential component of freedom of thought and conscience that cannot be compromised. (PK)

Editorials

The Need For Eupraxophy

Tim Madigan

Kenneth Inada, a professor of philosophy at the State University of New York at Buffalo, attended the Tenth Humanist World Congress, held at the university last summer. His specialty is Eastern philosophy, and after the congress he expressed surprise that there was no focus at all upon this particular branch of thought. From his perspective, Confucianism, Taoism, and Zen Buddhism can be considered "humanistic," and it seemed unfortunate that a world congress on humanism should pass up the opportunity to explore the connections.

This is a valid criticism of the organized

humanist movement, and one hopes that steps will be taken to rectify the oversight at future congresses. It also helps to demonstrate the significance of the word *eupraxophy* (meaning "good conduct and wisdom in living"), which Paul Kurtz has introduced as a description of secular humanism—for the same problem arises with these Eastern schools that arises with secular humanism when the attempt is made to classify them: Are they religions? Or are they philosophies?

It seems that both categories are unsatisfactory. The influential Zen scholar D. T.

Suzuki, in his book *An Introduction To Zen Buddhism*, writes that Zen is not a philosophy in the ordinary sense of the word, nor is it a religion in the sense that the term is popularly understood. He considers it to be a systematic training of the mind, and adds that it deals not with concepts, but rather with living facts of life. "Whatever else Zen may be, it is practical and commonplace and at the same time most living," he writes. The old dichotomy of religion or philosophy fails to grasp the true nature of Zen. Likewise, Taoist and Confucianist scholars frequently point out that these schools of thought cannot rightly be labeled as philosophies or religions—either ascription would be misleading. Religion, at least from our Western perspective, has certain clear-cut characteristics, such as a belief in a supernatural realm, worship of a deity or deities, and adherence to prescribed rites and rituals. Not all of these characteristics can rightly be applied to these Eastern schools, nor can they be applied to secular humanism.

"Philosophy"—meaning literally "love of wisdom"—may be a better fit, but this too seems inadequate, for these schools do not merely contemplate the world. They also have a set of guidelines and goals for leading a good life. Perhaps, then, the phrase that best captures what they are is a "way of life," or, to quote Harry Stopes-Roe of the University of Birmingham, a "lifestyle."

The humanist movement has been arguing for many years over whether it can best be considered a religion or a philosophy. Many people hold strong views on this topic and they are unlikely to change their positions. It is rather like the beer commercial in which one group of vociferous athletes shouts, "Less filling!" while another group reciprocates with "Great taste!" Apparently, never the twain shall meet.

An attempt has been made to bridge this gap by stating that for some people humanism is a secular philosophy, while for others it is a nontheistic religion. But this compromise seems unsatisfactory. There are, to be sure, professed *religious* humanists, notably Unitarian-Universalists. But there are also those who, like me, consider themselves to be *secular* humanists. They do not want to be a part of any religion, be it theistic or nontheistic. To say that one person's religion is another person's "way of life" does not do justice to either view.

Of course, the crux of the matter here is how one defines religion. Robert Ingersoll, surely one of the greatest humanists of all time, spoke of the religion of humanity, and said that this alone is the one true religion. And John Stuart Mill, an unbe-

liever and the chief exponent of utilitarianism (which should itself be considered a eupraxophy), had this to say in his autobiography:

Of unbelievers (so called) as well as of believers, there are many species, including almost every variety of moral type. But the best among them, as no one who has had opportunities of really knowing them will hesitate to affirm (believers rarely have that opportunity), are more genuinely religious, in the best sense of the word religion, than those who exclusively arrogate to themselves the title.

Though the meaning of religion implied here makes sense intuitively as a tendency toward conscientiousness and duty, nonetheless it is far from the sense in which the term is generally understood. If I choose to call a dog a cat, my friends and I will know exactly what I'm talking about, but it will be sure to cause confusion when those who use the traditional terms for these animals hear me speak.

The same criticism can be made of "philosophy," which, at least since the twentieth century, has a highly specialized, academic meaning. This, too, hinders using the word as a description of humanism. As Richard Rorty puts it in his book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, "The more scientific and 'rigorous' philosophy became, the less it had to do with the rest of culture, and the more absurd its traditional pretensions seemed . . . Philosophy as a whole was shrugged off by those who wanted an ideology or a self-image."

The question of how best to define humanism has been on Paul Kurtz's mind for quite some time. In his opinion, it is fruitless to continue to try to force it into the Procrustean bed of either religion or of philosophy. He decided to coin a new term, derived from Greek roots so that it can be used in several languages. The Dutch, for instance, have a term that seems to capture the essence of humanism—*levensbeschouwing*, or "view of life"—but there's a real danger that non-Dutch speaking people could severely injure themselves by trying to say that word in one breath. The Germans use the term *weltanschauung* ("worldview"), but that too seems an imposing word to utter. In addition, neither of these terms captures the quality of action and conduct: One does not merely have a view of one's life, one must lead it as well.

The term Kurtz finally came up with, *eupraxophy*, seems to best express the view that humanism has both a cosmic perspective and a guidance for practical living.

Why coin a new term? Precisely because the old terms are inadequate. It was this sort of thinking that led T. H. Huxley to coin the term "agnosticism" in 1869. He felt that the words "atheism" and "theism" both failed to capture the notion that one could be uncertain about ultimate metaphysical concerns. In his essay entitled "Agnosticism," Huxley writes:

When I reached intellectual maturity and began to ask myself whether I was an atheist, a theist, or a pantheist; a materialist or an idealist; a Christian or a freethinker; I found that the more I learned and reflected, the less ready I was to answer; until at last, I came to the conclusion that I had neither art nor part with any of these denominations, except the last. The one thing in which most of these good people were agreed was the one thing in which I differed from them. They were quite sure they had attained a certain "gnosis"—had, more or less successfully, solved the problems of existence; while I was quite sure I had not, and had a pretty strong conviction that the problem was insoluble.

The word "agnosticism" has proved to be quite useful for others who have found themselves in Huxley's predicament. But, in and of itself, the term does not express any positive dimensions. One may be an agnostic or atheist regarding the question of God's existence, but this still leaves open the question of how to develop an ethical outlook by which to live. It is this notion that Kurtz attempts to capture with his use of "eupraxophy."

Needless to say, no one has to accept this term; what is important is the concept behind the word, not the word itself. As the general semanticists say, Let's not confuse the map with the territory. It would be a shame to see people arguing forever over whether or not humanism is a eupraxophy; this would just replicate the very logjam from which Kurtz is trying to break away.

There are two senses in which the humanist movement needs eupraxophy; both as a word, to help better define what humanism is, and as a concept, namely a naturalistic, ethical way of life. It is the second sense that is all-important, and that connects humanism with other ways of life, such as the ancient Greek and Roman schools of Stoicism, Skepticism, and Epicureanism, as well as many of the Eastern schools of thought.

I do not mean to imply that secular humanism is synonymous with or even closely related to Confucianism, Zen Buddhism, and Taoism. Obviously, there

are very real differences between them. But they do have more in common than one might suspect. Kenneth Inada's observation is well taken. For centuries the humanist movement has been disentangling itself from the prevalent Christian religions of the West, and its views on religion and philosophy have been shaped by this struggle. It will be to the movement's benefit to look Eastward and try to come to grips with the messages of these various eupraxophies. Interestingly enough, important work is now being done by Eastern scholars (including Inada) and their Western colleagues on the connection between these

schools and the writings of such pragmatic philosophers as John Dewey and William James, who are considered important influences on the humanist movement.

There is much to be gained by pursuing a dialogue with these eupraxophies, and in future issues of *FREE INQUIRY* we will be examining their similarities and differences with traditional Western-influenced humanism. Our hope is that by utilizing eupraxophy—both the word and the concept—we can come to a deeper understanding of these relationships. In the words of Confucius: "It is enough that the language one uses gets the point across." ●

Some Thoughts on Revolution and Social Change

Vern L. Bullough

This year marks the bicentennial of the French Revolution, which brings to mind the problems of revolution and social change. Humanists tend to become discouraged when they see the reinvigoration of phenomena such as religious fundamentalism, the continuation of superstition, and the rise of pseudoscience. By all rules of rational thinking, most such beliefs should long ago have been discarded. The continued persistence of fanaticism, superstition, and ignorance, however, emphasizes the difficulty of social change, and nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the study of political revolutions.

Though we tend to glorify the French Revolution for its defense of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, and for its attack on the prejudices of the past, we should not forget that it was followed by a long period of fierce reaction. Moreover, the revolution itself degenerated

rather rapidly, from the signing of the noble Declaration of the Rights of Man to the head-chopping madness of Robespierre's brief rule and ultimately to Napoleon's martial dictatorship. Though it proved difficult to return things to the way they were before Napoleon's defeat in 1815, this did not prevent the victors from attempting to turn the clock back. Almost inevitably, the French Revolution was followed by three more revolutions, in 1830, 1848, and 1870, all striving to achieve the ideals originally proclaimed in 1789. None of these revolutions was particularly successful in its aims, although gradually progress was made toward greater individual freedom and toward freedom of expression.

More rapid progress was hindered because the French Revolution had proved to be so traumatizing to so many that each generation seemed to fight the same battles

over and over again. It has only been in the past two or three decades that the French have stopped trying to refight the historical battles and a kind of consensus has emerged regarding the revolution's good and bad points. Each generation of revolutionaries has studied the French Revolution as a model of what to do and what not to do. Marx realized the danger of reaction and tried to prevent it by establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat—unfortunately he failed to realize that the very dictatorship could be reactionary.

If glasnost has anything to demonstrate to us, it is that revolutionaries themselves can become reactionary, and that change neither begins nor ends with a revolution. It is not inconceivable that glasnost will allow some of the most idealistic hopes of the revolutionaries in the Soviet Union to be realized; but the Soviets have not yet come to terms with their revolution as the French have with theirs. Similarly, Mao's revolution in China led to a period of despotism that only today is beginning to be challenged.

Though each succeeding revolution has been hailed by a new generation as bringing enlightenment to a people or a country, the grand new day almost always fails to materialize and there is usually a period of reaction, either institutionalized by the revolutionary forces themselves or brought about by outsiders. Hegel long ago pointed this out with his concept of thesis, antithesis, and new synthesis, but progressives tend to forget that the synthesis is not necessarily a forward step. It can be a backward one as well.

Though nothing is ever static, the kind of changes that humanists would like to see can only be brought about with continuing and persistent effort. They will require constant pressure and education, and active vigilance; even then, progress toward our ultimate goals will be slow. This is as true for intellectual and social movements such as humanism as it is for political movements.

Christianity, for example, succeeded the pagan religions of Rome, but in the process Christianity itself adopted most of the beliefs and concepts of the pagan religions, and the resultant Christianity would not be recognized by the authors of the New Testament. Today there is a huge variety of Christian denominations, which emphasizes just how much individuals and groups are influenced by the traditions of the past.

In short, humanists should not expect miracles. No revolution is going to sweep away superstition and pseudoscience. The key to success is to keep plugging away at our message generation after generation. Perhaps ultimately more will listen. ●

**Coming soon . . .
in future issues of
*FREE INQUIRY***

- Moral Education for Children
- Humanism and Libertarianism
- Religion in the Public Schools
- Humanism and Socialism

On the Barricades

Women shun clergy's advice

A survey of 18,125 American women who identify themselves with a religion shows that less than 3 percent would turn to the clergy for moral guidance, *McCall's* magazine reported.

The magazine said that 97 percent of the readers who responded said they would "rely on their own conscience rather than traditional church teaching to make decisions on ethical issues ranging from premarital sex and contraception to withdrawing life-support systems from terminally ill patients."

The women were about 97 percent Christian, 27 percent of those Catholic. Two percent were Jewish. (UPI)

ACLU protests governor's inaugural mass

Rhode Island governor Edward D. DiPrete's decision to kick off his inaugural festivities with a Roman Catholic mass drew fire from the state branch of the American Civil Liberties Union.

ACLU lawyers in the state were concerned that public funds may have been spent on the religious service and that it appeared to have official state sponsorship. Steven Brown, the executive director of the ACLU's Rhode Island chapter, told the Associated Press, "The state should not be in the business of using state funds to sponsor a religious service."

DiPrete listed the mass in a newspaper advertisement as part of the inaugural celebration. It was also promoted in a news release sent on state stationery with the governor's letterhead. (*Church & State*)

Vatican denounces American morals

On March 9, the Vatican wound up a closed four-day summit concerned with the liberalization of the Catholic church. At the meeting, church officials reportedly told thirty-five American prelates to crack down on church annulments and begin stricter enforcement of church doctrines, particularly

those dealing with human sexuality.

San Francisco archbishop John Quinn reportedly accused the press of promoting a trivialized view that sexuality is merely an instrument for personal gratification. Cardinal Edouare Gagnon, president of the Pontifical Council for the Family, warned that "ideological feminism has a deleterious influence on the family," and linked the church's condemnation of homosexuality to its birth-control ban: "If we accept sex without children through contraception, we would be led to homosexuality as a way of life."

American television was also attacked by Gagnon, for "subtle pornography that is degrading moral values." He criticized television shows and movies that "pretend to depict normal American life."

Christian protests affecting advertisers

Christian protests apparently are having increasing influence on television's commercial advertisers, and thus on the medium itself.

The Pepsi-Cola company recently agreed not to air its commercial starring the singer Madonna, and also withdrew its sponsorship of her upcoming U.S. tour. The company

had been threatened with boycotts from the American Family Association (AFA) and from the Roman Catholic Bishop Rene H. Gracida of Corpus Christi, Texas, among others, because of objections to her sensual video, "Like a Prayer." Pepsi claimed that it did not know of the content of the video when it made the commercial. "We think Pepsi has made a very wise business and moral decision," said the Reverend Donald W. Wildmon, AFA Executive Director.

He also said that Domino's Pizza, Ralston Purina, and General Mills have cancelled their advertising on "Saturday Night Live" after protests from the association. "More and more corporations are beginning to say no to the exploitative and anti-Christian programming of the networks," said Wildmon.

Atheist refuses to swear on Bible

Leading church groups in Australia supported Bill Hayden's decision not to swear on a Bible when he was made Governor-General of Australia in March.

Hayden, a self-described atheist, affirmed his allegiance to the Queen and promised to carry out faithfully the duties of the vice-regal office at his swearing-in ceremony. He is believed to be the first Governor-General to take advantage of this option, provided under the Australian Constitution.

Hayden's professed atheism has already raised concern in the Australian scout movement, which he will head in his new role. The Scout Association of Australia has said that he will be expected to take the scout promise, which includes a pledge to honor God.

Some Political Meanings of the March in Washington

Adeline Levine

On Sunday, April 9, 1989, more than 300,000 Americans—perhaps as many as 600,000—took part in a march in Washington, D.C. to tell our political leaders that we have turned a corner in the struggle to preserve

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people's rights to safe and legal abortions.

I was in Washington that day, in one of the lines of people that filled Constitution Avenue from curb to curb, in a parade that lasted for more than four hours. I interviewed people, observed them, and felt the energy and determination in the marchers, who came from every state to express their views in a firm and dramatic fashion. The crowd that day was made up of women and

men, people of all ages, mothers and daughters, family groups, friends, organization and college groups; people who seemed educated, well organized, and aware of the workings of the political process. The huge crowd was telling our elected representatives, in a very loud voice, that we will never go back to the pre *Roe v. Wade* days, when abortions were illegal, clandestine, and dangerous.

From time immemorial, people have limited their reproductive capabilities and their family size. Various methods have assumed greater importance at different times, depending upon the accessibility of the easiest and safest means, and the social climate, or what is generally considered appropriate behavior in regard to reproduction and care of children. During the period of our history from colonial days to the mid-1800s there was very little or no legal regulation of abortion, and products and procedures to induce abortions were freely advertised in newspapers. The first state laws regulating abortion were passed simply to protect the lives of women from unsafe practices. It was not until after the Civil War that physicians, who were striving to become more professional by limiting medical practice to those trained in medical schools, persuaded state legislatures to restrict women's access to abortion. This movement coincided with a wave of rigid anti-vice statutes, which classified as pornography any information about contraception. However, even when restrictive laws were in place across the United States, people still managed to limit family size and millions of women got abortions chiefly through the services of illegal practitioners.

The Supreme Court did not suddenly discover or create a constitutional right to abortion in 1973. *Roe v. Wade* drew a careful compromise between the individual's right to privacy and the state's traditional mandate to protect the health and welfare of its people. Thus, *Roe* does not provide "abortion on demand" with no protection for the fetus. Rather, the Supreme Court ruled that the states may regulate abortions without violating the Constitution, in order to protect the life of the mother after the first trimester of pregnancy, and the life of the fetus after the second trimester. (The chances of fetal viability before the third trimester have not significantly improved since 1973.)

Roe v. Wade was simply following a trend. By the early 1970s, restrictions on the advertising and distribution of contraceptives had been declared unconstitutional; seventeen states had repealed or reformed their restrictive abortion laws; national medical, legal, religious, and social welfare

organizations were calling for further reform and repeal of abortion laws; and national opinion polls showed that the majority of Americans thought that abortion should be legal.

More than twenty-one million legal abortions have been performed since the *Roe v. Wade* decision. There are at least that many sets of complicated social and personal answers to the question, "Why do American women have abortions?" It is not simply the life of an innocent fetus versus the whims of a reckless, inconvenienced woman.

A 1988 study published by the Alan Guttmacher Institute shows that the United States has lower rates of contraceptive use and higher rates of pregnancy, unintended births, and abortion than do nineteen other Western democracies. This is largely because in other countries there is a greater variety of contraceptives, they are easily available, and they are very inexpensive; as a result they are used more frequently and successfully in those countries.

Women have complex personal reasons for having abortions. In another study done by the Institute in 1988, women were surveyed about their reasons for having abortions. Of the 1,900 women surveyed, *none* said they had had abortions because they were unhappy with their unborn child's gender, *none* said they chose abortion rather than use contraceptives, and only 1 percent were the victims of rape or incest. Rather, most women had several reasons that did not fit into simple patterns: They could not afford to have a baby and bring up a child,

they wanted to avoid single parenthood, they were too immature, they had all the children they wanted. In 13 percent of the cases, the fetus had health problems; in 7 percent of the cases the woman did. A major reason, among others cited by the largest percentage, was that they were concerned about how having a baby would change their lives; it is that right to control the course of their lives that loomed large for many women.

Public opinion polls have consistently shown that the majority of Americans are prochoice, even if they are personally opposed to abortions, and that most people deeply desire control over personal decisions. The meaning of these polls was manifested in the April 9 March in Washington. Until now, those who believe in choice have been silent, confident that the law was on their side, confident that our constitutional mandate to keep church and state separate would prevent a small minority of religious extremists from imposing their agendas on the rest of the country.

But recent court cases, as well as the assiduous courtship of the far right by recent political leaders, have aroused the invisible silent majority to become visible and vocal. Even the low estimate for attendance at the April 9 march far outshadows the 67,000 anti-abortionists who gathered in Washington in January, to be greeted by the newly elected George Bush and Dan Quayle. Politicians realize that the large turnout for such an event represents just a small portion of the vast majority of the voters and taxpayers in this country. In thousands of



Scenes from the April 9 March in Washington.



Tom Flynn

Tom Flynn

local areas, elected officials are beginning to hear from people newly energized by the hundreds of thousands who were willing to go to the trouble and expense of participating in the national gathering.

People's reasons for voting are complicated, and most people are not single-issue voters. However, the antichoice movement has tried to frame voting and other political decisions in that deceptively simple way, from ex-President Reagan's litmus test for judicial appointments, to the "Right to Life" political party. Prochoice forces are well aware, however, that the question of abortion is not a single issue. It is only part

of a package that includes restrictions on freedom of expression, on contraceptive use and research, and on information about reproduction and contraceptives, and the imposition of an extremely narrow religious viewpoint on the American people, through government intervention.

Those who marched in Washington, and their millions of supporters across the land, should be taken seriously. They have put our politicians on notice: elected representatives can try to thwart the will of the American people, but if they do, they may well risk their own political lives in that attempt. ●

The Abortion Battle

Helen Dalley

It is 7:30 A.M. on a cold Saturday morning in February. A cool breeze is blowing across the parking lot outside of an abortion clinic in Western New York. Even though we are wearing several layers of clothing, the cold nips at us as we wait for the "Operation Bully" people to arrive. Some of the patients who had early appointments have been spared the harassment others will encounter, including having photos of bloody five-month-old fetuses shoved in their faces and constant verbal assaults.

The regular group of antichoice people is now in place. As usual, there are more men than women. One man I haven't seen previously says, "So this is where they kill the babies."

A young couple arrives and we approach their car as the antichoice people also try to reach them. The young woman's face looks shocked and we are aware that she probably is trying to figure out who is friend and who is foe. We introduce ourselves as escorts from the clinic and ask if she would like us to walk in with her. She accepts our offer and we form a blockade so that the others cannot get too close. The protesters start out with mild admonitions: "You don't have to go in there. We will help you. We have a doctor to deliver your baby and we will get maternity clothes for you and a crib for your baby." When the couple continues toward the door we talk to them about the weather and ask if they watched television the night before to break the tension. Now

the antichoiceers, seeing that they are losing their quarry, step up their pace: "They are going to rip the arms and legs off of your baby and crush its head," shouts one. Another attacks the young man with, "Why aren't you man enough to marry her?" The young man lashes back with some epithets and tries vainly to protect his companion from the hurtful remarks.

No sooner do we get the couple in the door of the clinic than three young women arrive. They haven't even had a chance to get out of the car before a man presses the picture of the bloody fetus against their window. The girls are frightened but we form a ring around them and make it to the back door. This time the protesters try another tactic: "You may hemorrhage during this abortion or even go into a coma! You may need a transfusion and get AIDS from it! One out of four of you will never be able to have a baby! There is an increased chance of tubal pregnancies and miscarriage!" They do not mention that it is seven times riskier to carry a pregnancy to term, or that abortion is one of the safest and most common medical procedures, now that it has been legalized. When we get inside, the girl who is obviously the patient asks, "Are they allowed to do that?" I wish I could explain their abuse of the privilege of free speech in such a cruel venture.

There is a short break between patients and as we chat, the sidewalk intimidators come over to inform us that they will be rewarded in heaven for saving babies. One man wants us to think about what is in store for us; I am so cold that the idea of fire and brimstone is rather appealing. They bow their heads and pray that we will soon see

the truth and the only way to salvation. We ignore them and continue to chat; eventually they get discouraged by our lack of reaction and walk away muttering about "those uppity women."

A middle-aged couple and their daughter approach from across the street. As the protesters start their spiel, the father yells back at them, "You were no help at all." The young woman says, "It is my decision; I have made up my mind." Apparently they had previously sought "help" from the religious zealots and found that it wasn't adequate.

We now notice a man with a very young girl heading toward the building. The sidewalk bullies are not daunted by the apparent immaturity of the girl and start to shove their leaflets in her face. At this point, the man angrily explains that they are only going to see the dentist; he asks these people not to bother his daughter, she is only twelve years old. The protesters hand them the leaflets anyway, saying that they may need this information some day or know someone who does.

One woman pulls out her rosary beads and prays while focusing her eyes toward the clinic. These people talk about the pain that the fetus suffers. I would like to tell them that the synapses in the brain of the fetus are not yet connected, so it can't feel anything—but I know they would not believe me.

In all of the mornings I have spent at the clinics, I have yet to see anyone be persuaded to turn away by these religious fanatics. Often, the patients instead look more determined. It is an invasion of a woman's privacy to have to suffer this kind of interference in this most private of decisions. There are no really good choices at such a time, but she should be allowed to make the one that is best for her.

Our shift ends after an hour and a half. That doesn't seem like a very long time, but we are drained from the frustration. What we are doing is important; we want to show our support for the clinic operators and personnel, and we want to let women know that there is support in the community for their right to choose what is best for them. We will not accept intimidation and their trivialization of motherhood. Women can and do make good ethical decisions for themselves and for children they choose to carry to term. It should not be a stranger's decision to force a woman to bear a child for any reason—particularly an illogical one based on religious beliefs.

We are in this fight to the end and will continue our Saturday-morning rescue of patients for as long as we are needed. ●

Helen Dalley is a bookkeeper and the daughter of a fundamentalist minister. She is active in the Pro-Choice Network.

The Future of Marxism

An Interview with Sidney Hook

Tibor Machan



Sidney Hook is Emeritus Professor at New York University and a Senior Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution of War, Revolution, and Peace at Stanford University. He is a former president of the American Philosophical Association. In 1986 he was awarded the Medal of Freedom, the highest honor that can be obtained by a U.S. citizen.

Tibor Machan is professor of philosophy at Auburn University. He is co-founder and a senior editor of Reason magazine, and has written many books, articles, and essays.

Perestroika and Glasnost in the Soviet Union

MACHAN: The recent developments in the Soviet Union—Gorbachev's policies of perestroika and glasnost—seem to pose some interesting problems for those concerned with understanding the relationship between Marxist-Leninist doctrine and practice, and the future of Marxism itself. Like many others, I am not yet making any firm conclusions—but it appears that two possibilities are most likely.

It is conceivable that Gorbachev really has concluded that the communist vision is a mistake and is now trying to steer clear of it as best as is possible without major upheavals in the Soviet Union. This may entail opening the society in many ways—economic, intellectual, religious, ethnic, nationalistic, and so on.

But it is also possible that Gorbachev is still a Marxist-Leninist who simply realizes that it is hopeless to get the revolution on course without first experiencing a capitalist economic phase—just as Marx believed. At first the Soviet Communists may have hoped to avoid the capitalist phase by incorporating capitalist regions of the world through military and diplomatic expansionism. Since this did not work, another course is now being pursued. Later the socialist and communist phases of revolutionary development can continue. Which of these scenarios is the right one—or whether there is yet another—I cannot determine from what I know. And there is also the question about whether Gorbachev can do much about the Soviet economy. So I remain cautiously rather than recklessly hopeful. How do you see the matter?

HOOK: I do not believe that there is an unalterable essence that explains the concept and existence of any social system, including communism. Communism is a historical phenomenon and the question of its possible development is not logical, but is based on a whole web of probabilities. There is no convincing evidence that Gorbachev or any other leader in the Soviet Union has given up his faith in communism or has renounced the Leninist version or the perversion of Marxism that has flourished in the country. There have been many changes in strategy and tactics since the Communist Party seized power in 1917. To many people the prediction made early in 1939 that Stalin would make and faithfully keep a pact with Hitler would have appeared far less likely than that he would loosen the rigors of his dictatorship along

the lines that Gorbachev has followed. What would be the empirical evidence that communism had changed its character in the Soviet Union to the same degree that Fascist Spain transformed itself politically to the status of present-day Spain? As a minimum indispensable of a change warranting such a belief, we would have to observe a situation *in place* in which the political legitimacy of the monopoly of power of the Communist Party could be challenged in an uncoerced election in which there would be no official engineering of consent, and in which there would be guaranteed freedom of the press, including access to television and to all other media. In general terms, if the Soviet Union would make possible a convocation of a Constituent Assembly—which it bayoneted out of existence in 1918—and abided by the result, and thereafter *institutionalized* all the reforms incidental to the change, making it possible for political minorities peacefully to become majorities, this would be sufficient evidence.

Whether or not the changes so far introduced by Gorbachev presage further changes in this direction is uncertain. Are they concessions or maneuvers to convince the West and especially the United States to lull their sense of insecurity and induce them to bolster the economic system of the Soviet Union, which is in desperate straits? Or are they sincerely undertaken by a group of reformers prepared to democratize the Soviet Union if that is the price that must be paid for economic viability? Although I am open to more evidence, I am still very doubtful that the latter is the case. The primary cause of my doubt is that *so far* it seems to me that the KGB is still in charge, both in domestic and international Soviet operations. To anyone who knows anything about the KGB and its long history of absolutely ruthless oppressions—multiple gulags, Katyn's forrest massacres, frame-ups, campaigns of disinformation, and so on—the possibility that it has now become an agency of genuine democratic reform is as startling as the likelihood that the pope in his heart of hearts has become a secular, naturalistic, democratic humanist. Not impossible, of course, but in both cases there is reason enough for a sustained and enlightened argument from Missouri; that is, Show me. As Marx would have said (to the man who boasted of his great champion leap on the island of Rhodes), "*Hic Rhodus, hic Raetus.*"

When I say that the KGB is still in charge on the domestic front, I mean that, for all the proclamations about glasnost, the process is highly selective. Decisions are being made concerning whom to release from the camps, whom to rehabilitate, whom to restore to their posts, and so on, with an eye to public relations, to dissolving centers of opposition abroad, to the extension of credits, and to restrictions on favored treatment in trade, especially with the United States. They still play a cat-and-mouse game with Soviet Jews who wish to exercise their right to emigrate. To help open the gates of trade and credit with the West, the Kremlin is even willing to host a conference on human rights at the same time that its promises at previous Helsinki Conferences remain unfulfilled. Its motivation is as transparent as would be that of Qaddafi were he to announce a conference in Libya to combat terrorism.

Internationally the KGB is still at work. The Berlin Wall still stands, Soviet armies still occupy what used to be called the captive nations. Nationalist movements in the Baltic countries, the Ukraine, and Armenia are still being repressed, although not so openly as in the past. Most significant is the unremitting program of disinformation waged against the United States throughout the world. It was *after* Gorbachev came to power that the KGB planted the story that the AIDS virus had been created by a U.S. Army biological laboratory at Fort Derritt, Maryland, engaged in biological warfare research. Old habits die hard. Under Stalin the KGB invented the story that the United States had waged germ warfare in Korea. The KGB is still engaged in attributing every international crime or terrorist action against non-Communist statesmen to the machinations of the CIA, as in the assassinations of Indira Gandhi and Olaf Palme. If, as a result of KGB intrigue, Gorbachev meets with an accident, that too will be laid at the door of the United States. Pleading dire economic need, the Kremlin not only invests billions upon billions in the disinformation operations of the KGB but uses the KGB to oversee the distribution of even vaster funds to anti-American movements and countries whenever and wherever it anticipates a strategic advantage in doing so. They are still underwriting the terrorist regime of Castro and others of his political kidney elsewhere.

All this should reinforce the caution of the West. Never in the past seventy years has it been so important to study the theory and practice of Communism. However, if our hopes may be dupes, our fears may be liars. History is full of surprises. We can be confident that whatever develops in the future in the Soviet Union, it will be different from what most of us expect. If Gorbachev remains in power, he must increase the current standard of living of the Soviet masses. If he loses political power, it is uncertain what course events will take. The only certain prediction in that event is that the Stephen Cohens and Alexander Dallins and their ideological brothers will contend that the United States—not the Communist system of despotism—is responsible for Gorbachev's failure.

MACHAN: Quite apart from whether the Soviet Union authentically latches onto the label "Marxist" for itself, are there particular worries that we in the West ought to have about the Soviets because they have for a long while chosen Marxism as their cover, as their official ideology? Because of that alone, is there some particular worry that we should pay attention to?

HOOK: I believe that what we have to worry about is not so much their Marxist beliefs, but their aggressive actions. It's their military forces and active agents of influence, both open and concealed, more than their theoreticians, that constitute a danger to the democratic West. Genuine critical and creative thinking about Marx ceased in the Soviet Union a long time ago.

I believe that if Marx's works were available in *uncensored* form to individuals in the Soviet Union, they would see the disparity between the kind of society Marx urged and the kind of society under which they live and have lived. Incidentally, glasnost works in curious ways. Khrushchev's speech on Stalin's crimes has not yet been published, though

many things about the magnitude of Stalin's terror that are much worse have been published.

Marx and Marxism

MACHAN: Marxism is probably most popular—not only among intellectuals but also among ordinary people—in Central America, Asia, and Africa. Why is that so?

HOOK: I think that's evidence that Marx's ideas—what he said and what people think he said—still have relevance to what's going on in the world today, and to the possibilities open to human beings. It seems to me quite clear that unless people have some understanding of what Marx taught and how others interpret his teachings, they can't understand the world in which they live; it is as if they are trying to understand the Middle Ages without any knowledge of Christianity.

MACHAN: Marx lived more than a hundred years ago, and wrote about matters such as revolution, the dialectic, and alienation in very complicated prose. How can such a person attract the hearts and spirits of poor folk everywhere?

HOOK: Because of the way in which his ideas are being expounded by those who call themselves his followers, and because of the central appeal that Marx made to human beings. Not so much because of the doctrines that appeal to intellectuals, but rather because of the promise of transforming the world so that it better conforms to human desires.

MACHAN: There's been some suggestion that one finds in Marxism a kind of secularized version of certain elements of Christianity. Do you agree with that?

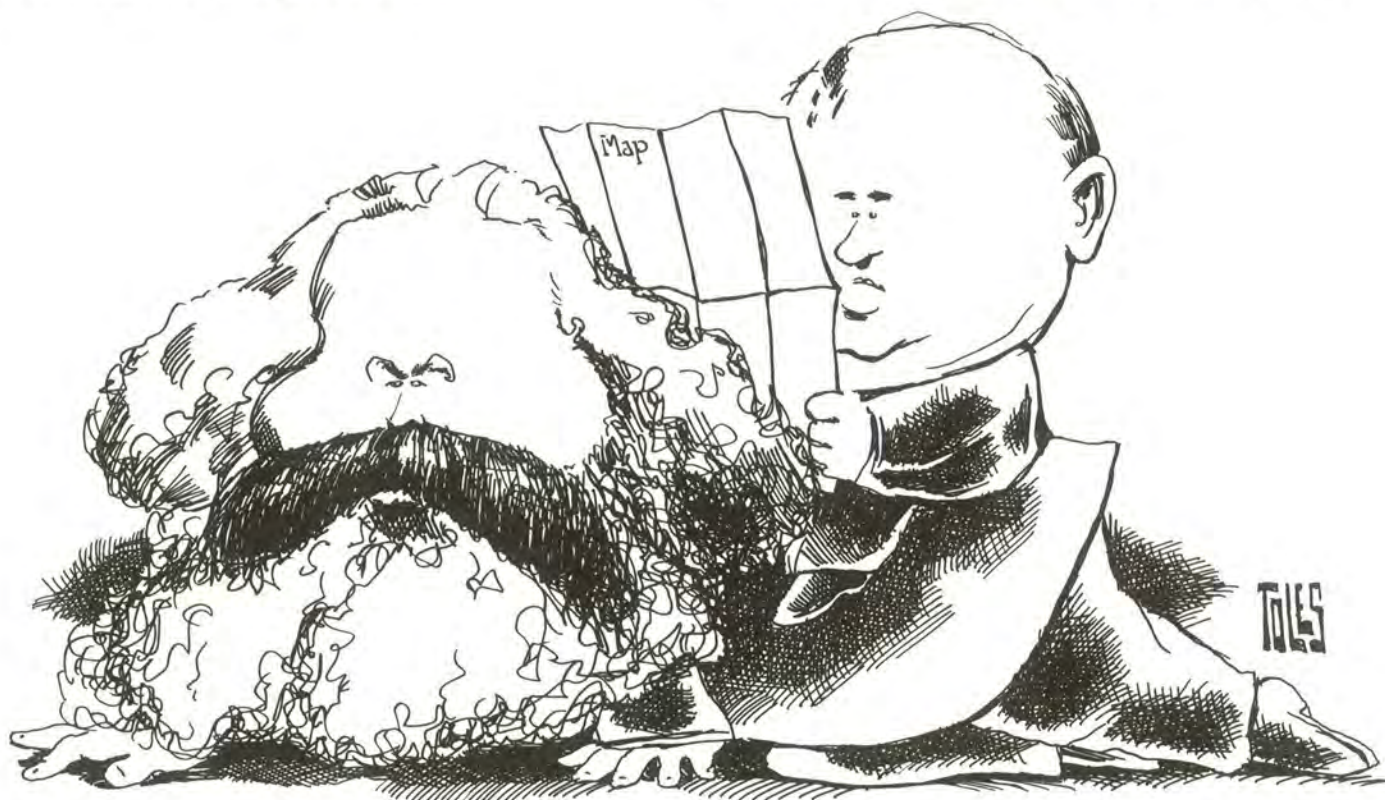
HOOK: Well, if the emphasis is upon the words "secularized version," yes; but one should recall that Marx was militantly atheistic. Indeed, he thought that the critique of religion was the beginning of the critique of all institutions in society. At the same time his vision of history, as expounded by popularizers, promised a society in which all human desires could be easily gratified, so that in one sense he was offering a secular equivalent of heaven on earth—though I think it would be an exaggeration to account for his influence in terms of the literal expectation of that. There is a passionate quest for social justice behind Marxism, but interestingly enough he maintained that he wasn't interested in questions of justice; he was interested in describing the inevitable course of history. He was wrong about inevitability. As I have said elsewhere, "History has been guilty of lese-Marxism."

MACHAN: What then is the role of the good deal of moralistic language associated with Marxism?

HOOK: That moralistic language is, despite Marx's own views, the clue to the dynamic of the Marxist movements. Very few people have been influenced by his theory of value or by the technicalities of historical materialism. But many human beings in the past century looked to the reform of society and recognized in Marxism a movement in that direction.

MACHAN: But isn't honoring the laboring masses one of the most attractive parts of Marxism?

HOOK: For Marx the source of all economic value is the amount of socially necessary labor time involved in production. Most economists certainly do not accept this



analysis, particularly since Marx thought of labor as a homogeneous quality and tried to reduce skilled intellectual labor to compound physical labor. And that is inherently unacceptable in terms of any plausible economic or philosophical analyses.

MACHAN: But in a way it seems to accord more with common sense because most of us ordinary human beings find it unjust that a person who sweats and labors over some task gets paid so much less than a person who does something that comes easy and is a matter of joy or a game of the mind.

HOOK: Yes, that's true. But there's a difference between asserting that unless a person makes a contribution to society he's not entitled to a reward, and asserting that the rewards that one gets should be a function merely of the amount of labor that one engages in. It would be like trying to draw an equation between Shakespeare and a thousand minor poets. How would you equate the labor of a scientist whose discoveries might transform the productive potential of a country with the unskilled labor of someone who is engaged in the physical aspects of production? The market has some use here, albeit a limited one.

Dialectical Materialism

MACHAN: Some of Marx's ideas were of course not original, but one of them clearly was—the notion of scientific socialism. And yet he wasn't quite like all the other scientists with whom we are familiar in the Newtonian Era. He wasn't quite like John Stuart Mill, for instance, who also thought himself to be a scientist. What was it about Marx that made him a different kind of scientist?

HOOK: Marx thought of himself as a scientific socialist, in contradistinction to utopian socialists, although I think a good case can be made that he was one of the most important utopian socialists who ever lived. When he spoke of himself as a scientific socialist he meant that he was concerned with those conditions that were necessary before socialism could be introduced into society. He was distinct from other thinkers who were under the impression that socialism could be introduced anywhere if there were a number of benevolent people willing to make the first move. He was more realistic in his approach; he "hugged the ground," as some historians would say, indicating historical limits on what was possible. You couldn't have socialism, according to Marx, in an economy of scarcity.

This is very important because in his early writings, in the 1840s, he maintained that the attempt to introduce a collectivist economy in a country where scarcity was the rule, would do nothing but socialize poverty. It would bring back the classes and class struggles and, in his own words, "all the old crap of previous societies." If you take that literally it raises a question: Were the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the Chinese Communist Revolution actually carried out in the light of Marxist principles or in defiance of them? Of course, both invoked the name of Marx, but this is not the first time that the doctrines of the founder of a movement have been transformed, refuted, and "betrayed" by those who

have invoked his or her name. Recall that William of Ockham, the father of European nominalism, in order to get a hearing, characterized his views as "a return to Aristotle."

MACHAN: Is there any role in this area for the dialectical? Marx is called a dialectical materialist by historians. Does the "dialectic" mean anything here?

HOOK: The term *dialectic* has many meanings, and it has many meanings in Marx's writings too. It was derived from Hegel. When people speak of the dialectic in Marx, they can mean many things by it; how it's to be interpreted depends on the context. For one thing, dialectic represents the principle of struggle, the principle of negation. The flower is fertilized by the bee that robs it of its honey—but for the flower, that act of aggression has produced positive results.

Marx looked at history as a process in which there was action, reaction, and struggle. He maintained in a sense that anything that occurred in history—no matter how terrible it was—was necessary to the outcome; that the pain of the part, so to speak, was necessary for the good of the whole. Some theologians choking on the problem of evil have said something like this, too.

You might even call this a sort of secular equivalent to religion, since he was trying to find a justification for the struggles that would disappear when men would live peacefully together without any struggles.

MACHAN: So in a way, this notion of dialectic serves to explain development and growth in human society?

HOOK: In general. But Marx would maintain that historical explanation had to be more specific—that if you want to understand the development of the capitalist economy you had to start with the nature of a commodity and with the processes of manufacture, the accumulation of capital. Thus would an illustration of dialectical process be shown.

My reading of Marx is that he had a tendency to interpret the dialectical method as more or less equivalent with the scientific method as applied to the social process. And if that's true, I don't think there's much illumination in exploring the meaning of the dialectical method, since it is synonymous with the scientific method. One can ask of a Marxist, is there anything that is scientifically true and dialectically false? Is there anything that is scientifically false and dialectically true? And I think Marx himself would answer no to both questions. There is more confusion than illumination generated by the use of the term. Marx coquetted with it out of misplaced piety to Hegel.

MACHAN: But for example, in a way the whole notion that capitalists and workers can't get together and resolve their differences is explained by reference to this dialectic.

HOOK: No, it's explained by reference to the fact that a social product has to be divided among those who *own* the instruments of production and those who *work* them, and it's quite clear that the more one has, the less the other has. And Marx prided himself on establishing that the way in which the economy functioned would result in this conflict, that the workers would be pauperized by the development of the economy, that the rich would become richer and the workers pauperized. It didn't turn out that way, but that was a consequence of the economic process rather than his general

principle of dialectic, an economic process that, it turned out, he didn't understand. Capitalism did not break down in a final collapse. It developed by virtue of the democratic political process in the West into a welfare state.

MACHAN: It is often remarked, though, that Marx differs from his own age in that, unlike many of his contemporaries who adhered to a more classical mechanistic view of science, he introduced a more biologically oriented scientific model, which is expressed in terms of dialectic—the *developmental* approach. The world is not a static machine, it's a dynamic system of growth, and predictions are not as easy in such a dynamic system.

HOOK: Marx didn't hesitate to make predictions. It is true that he was concerned with the processes of growth, but it is also true that he rejected the view that you could apply the mechanistic principles of physics or chemistry to the phenomenon or phenomena of growth. He believed that there were social laws that were not reducible to laws of physics or chemistry.

So in that sense he repudiated what is called the mechanistic materialism of the eighteenth century. But a biological scientist would maintain that there is nothing distinctive about this approach to growth—that if you take a scientific approach to growth you are bound by what you find in your material and by the laws of evidence. The criteria of what is true or false remain the same regardless of whether you're studying physics or chemistry or biology.

MACHAN: Many say that Marx's predictions are vague and ambiguous, that they are overturned by history, that they lack specificity. But one might reply that Marx was not the kind of mechanistic scientist who offered precise predictions—he wrote more as a botanist would about the growth of a forest or of an individual plant. At any rate the contrast is between those who offer predictions based on Marx that in a particular year this will happen, versus those who look at it more in a biological way, as they would the growth of a human being for example; adolescence is reached approximately at this point in history.

HOOK: Yes, that's quite true. There are more variables involved in history than in biology, in biology than in physics. And even in physics, astronomy is a much more accurate science than is geology—it's a matter of degree.

Nonetheless, Marx made predictions about the future of capitalist society in his own lifetime; every ten years he expected the economic system of capitalism to break down. But by the time he published the first volume of *Das Kapital* in 1865—he died in 1883—capitalism had really taken off and developed in a way that Marx never anticipated. Unless we look at his predictions within a time frame, he can never be refuted, no matter what would happen. His statements wouldn't have any empirical content, and that certainly would mean that he was anything but a scientific economist or sociologist.

Marx and Human Nature

MACHAN: Does Marx have some definite concept of human nature, or is that concept in evolution throughout history?

HOOK: I think Marx had a historical conception of human

nature. That is to say, in his own time he was aware of the number of people who denied that it was possible to have a socialist society on the grounds that it was against human nature.

Some people think man is inherently evil; some think man is inherently good. Marx would have maintained that human nature is both good and evil, and that the essence of human nature must be found in every historical situation. In one place he says that human beings by acting upon the external world modify it and by modifying it modify their own nature. I'm inclined to agree with him, and I'm also inclined to deny that you can rule out anything about human behavior on the grounds that it's against human nature, particularly if history gives illustrations of it.

MACHAN: Isn't it the case, though, that at some point this development of human nature is supposed to come to an end, and then we really will have a kind of new man?

HOOK: That is where the utopian Marx makes an appearance. At some time in the future when society has been transformed, when the state has allegedly withered away, the modes of human conduct will be completely different from what they are today. We view the future as he described it very inadequately and imperfectly—we would say he's described a world we do not know, a world that transcends even the angelic world.

MACHAN: Is it true that that's why the concept of alienation has figured importantly into his earlier writings? He was saying basically that we have not yet reached the point where human nature fully realizes itself, so we're at odds with ourselves.

HOOK: This concept of alienation actually finds expression in Marx's writings before Marx became a Marxist. You must remember that Marx was not born a Marxist, he was first a Hegelian, then a Feuerbachian, and in 1847, in a book called *The German Ideology*, he developed what I think was a distinctly Marxist point of view.

His early manuscripts were published long after Marxism made an impact on Western Europe and the development of the working-class movement began. It is significant that these early manuscripts, in which he speaks of alienation, had great appeal to the French existentialists. I would maintain that what Marx wrote when he was a beardless youth is not as significant for the impact of his ideas than is what he wrote when he was the mature author of *Das Kapital*.

MACHAN: Would you say that the concept of species-being—the notion of man as part of all of society and as the conqueror of nature—was there from the beginning, or was that a later development?

HOOK: No, that is the early Marx who was not yet a Marxist. If Marx believed that human nature was a historical variable, then he could not have maintained that there was an essence of human nature of a species that was independent of history; that was incompatible with Marx's historical approach and even with the Hegelian influence in Marx.

MACHAN: Yet one can still conceive of human nature even though one only has its infantile versions at one's disposal for study. One can also think about, say, an oak tree, but only have the sapling before one to study and project what

the sapling will turn into. I think maybe Marx looked at human beings in capitalism and in feudalism and projected what that would lead to in communism.

HOOK: If that were true then Marx would have to be an Aristotelian who believed that final causes or goals determine everything that preceded them. This would be incompatible with the whole evolutionary outlook of Marxism. You see, when most people speak about human nature, at most they're talking about man's biological nature. Marx talked about human nature in terms of what we would today call social psychology, and asserted that the modes that moved human beings are functions of the society in which they live.

Marx was not a follower of Bentham; in fact he disagreed with Bentham. Bentham believed that there was a fixed human nature, that human beings *always* act on behalf of their own interests, and that motivation is selfish. Marx would have said that human beings are sometimes selfish and they're sometimes unselfish. He wasn't concerned with individuals, he was concerned with the pattern of modes that you find in existing societies, and he would say, for example, if the economy was in a state of scarcity, if there was great need, then more actions would be self-interested than if the economy were one in which there was plenty, in which case more actions would be concerned with the interests of others.

So that in that sense, to use an analogy, if you were trying to explain marriage systems throughout the world, Marx would deny that you can deduce the marriage system from the biology of sexual reproduction. The marriage systems depend upon a number of social factors. He thought that economics had a great influence even on the marriage system.

MACHAN: Human nature may for Marx be relative to the material reality that surrounds human beings. But that material reality is in a state of evolution, so there is some kind of predictable element in how human nature will develop, since nature around human beings develops predictably. There is a dynamics to it and there is a principle of this dynamics. So while there is a contextual element to what human beings are, it is not entirely flexible. It's not always black and white. Nature around human beings is one time a feudal system, another time it's a slave system, another time it's capitalism, eventually it's socialism. For Marx, does not nature move along with it in a somewhat predictable way?

HOOK: The prediction was based primarily upon the expectation of the kind of society in which human beings made their living. One of the reasons that Marx sketched so inadequately his classless society of the future is that he could hardly anticipate what would develop. But let me put it this way: Marx would be prepared to say that human nature is what human beings are accustomed to, and very often when people say that something is against human nature, it turns out that it's against what they are accustomed to.

You are right, Marx was a materialist. But for him part of the determining material forces was social. You recall his contention that people's consciousness does not determine their social existence, but their social existence determines their consciousness. That's what he believed, but that was only partly right. Marx's own social existence certainly didn't determine *his* consciousness. The leaders of the working class came from

other segments of society, so that here you have a situation in which Marx has an insight, but as with so many of his insights, it is a matter of degree. He doesn't tell you to what extent social existence determines consciousness, and the opposite can be just as true as some of Marx's own assertions.

MACHAN: But something that puzzles me is that if the social situation that surrounds us does not happen randomly but follows a pattern of development, then human beings too will be what they have to be on the basis of this pattern of development of the societies in which they live.

HOOK: Marx would consider that a tautology—human beings would be what they have to be but you can't tell what they'll have to be until you know the society in which they'll be living. I would assert that insofar as Marx was taking a scientific approach to human behavior and to social behavior, then the interposition of his own ideals would fall out of the range of acceptability.

MACHAN: Is it possible to say of Marxism that, at least prior to the achievement of communism, there is in every historical approach at least two kinds of people, members of the two classes that are in conflict with each other?

HOOK: I think Marx sometimes says that. But it's obvious that in some societies there are more than two classes. And it is obvious that in some societies similar classes conflict with one another more than they do with opposite classes.

MACHAN: What are the major features of these two classes in terms of the kind of people we should expect to be parts of them?

HOOK: The major conflict, class conflict, for Marx is derived from the role people play in the instruments of production. And in the *Manifesto*, as you'll recall, he talks about the slave and the slave owner, the serf and the feudal lord, and the worker and the capitalist. He regards these oppositions as flowing primarily from the mode of distribution for the social product that is created by the mode of production. One might of course point out that even though he made allowance for the tremendous productivity of science and technology, Marx seemed to be unaware that there will never be a time when there's more than enough of everything for everybody at the same moment. Even if everyone gets a desirable good, there may be a great difference between the value of the good to the persons who get it first and its value to the persons who get the ten millionth issue ten years later.

MACHAN: But he did seem to believe that exactly! When we talk about this Marxian conception of human nature in practical terms, should we understand by this that people in fifth century B.C.E. were very different and probably couldn't understand us if we were able to have a conversation with them?

HOOK: I think it is more plausible to assume that a person in the fifth century B.C.E. would not be able to understand our modes of behavior in the twentieth century, than that a person in the twentieth century would be unable to understand one from the fifth century B.C.E. We have the benefit of continuity of tradition. That is to say, we live our lives not only in the twentieth century, but as a result of the vicarious experiences we've had in reading the literature or the poetry or otherwise acquainting ourselves with the past

traditions. In that sense the present can understand the past more readily than the past can understand the present.

MACHAN: But there are some outstanding contrary examples. When one reads a dialogue by Plato one finds ideas expressed that one heard yesterday on the radio or television. There seems to be that kind of transcendence of history that in Marxian terms doesn't seem to match up very well.

HOOK: I think that's correct. Marx assumes that the ideas of a period were so unique that they could hardly be grasped in subsequent times unless there was this continuity. Yet he did recognize and expressly say that although Greek art reflects Greek society and its infrastructures, its ideals of beauty remain valid even for modern times.

Are Gorbachev's changes sincerely undertaken by a group of reformers prepared to democratize the Soviet Union if that is the price that must be paid for economic viability? I am still very doubtful that this is the case.

MACHAN: As Marx sees the matter, is there anything steady in human nature despite this constant evolution? Is there something essential that we *are*, in some crucial sense?

HOOK: As I understand Marx he would say that perhaps man's biological structure is relatively invariant. But, he would go on to add, the way in which the biological structure functions is sometimes determined or influenced by the social environment. This creates a problem of definition. At what point, then, would you say that man becomes something different from what he is? In a sense Marx says man is different today from what he was yesterday; certainly he's different as an adult from what he was as a child or as an infant. As far as human beings are concerned, one might say there is less change than Marx sometimes anticipates. Today, of course, with the advent of genetic engineering, we may be able to modify biology in ways somewhat comparable to natural evolutionary changes of ages past. But even the imaginative utopians did not envision the possibilities of this kind of scientific advance.

Class

MACHAN: Class conflict is one of the most prominent themes in Marx. Marx is a social analyst—a predictor of the future, a describer of the past. To what extent does this class conflict correspond to actual events in history?

HOOK: That's an interesting question, which cannot be easily answered. Of course everyone is impressed, and justifiably so, with Marx's emphasis on economic class and class struggles and the way in which ideologies often serve the interests of classes. But one must ask certain fundamental questions: What other classes and class conflicts are there in history? Is it true that *all* history, as Marx proclaims in the *Manifesto*, is the history of class struggle? It is obvious that societies are not always in conflict, that sometimes societies collaborate in the face of actual or fancied danger.

I believe that Marx had a great many insights into the relations of class, but one cannot accept the generalization without qualification; for example, the history of science is part of history, but it would be absurd to interpret it as a manifestation, primarily or even indirectly, of class struggles. There are classes in society other than economic classes. There are religious classes, racial classes, national classes. What Marx was saying is that economic class-consciousness and the conflicts of economic classes as a rule override all other conflicts.

Sometimes that's true, sometimes it's false. The true believer thinks that this concept of class struggle is the key to all societies, throughout all of history. But I would defy anyone to interpret the history of Ireland or the history of Israel merely or mainly in terms of economic class-conflicts.

MACHAN: Do you think that this contradicts the empirical tendencies in Marxian analysis, this insistence on looking at historical events as always related to the class struggle?

HOOK: No, I think it's a fruitful approach, but it must be tested by the analysis of specific events. Let's take a couple of illustrations from American history. The U.S. government's adoption of the Wagner Labor Relations Act actually organized the American working class. This could be interpreted as a manifestation of the class struggle, but certainly it is a very peculiar manifestation, since the actual initiative in organizing these workers came from the government, which presumably represents the interests of the dominant ruling economic class. Or take the impact of Prohibition in American history. No one can explain the United States in the twentieth century without reference to Prohibition and its consequences on American culture. But I would challenge anyone to interpret the Prohibition Amendment as a result of the class struggle. It was the result of the activity of the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

MACHAN: Does the class-struggle approach nevertheless apply to all civilizations—ancient Greece, for example?

HOOK: Certainly. The class-struggle approach applies in some degree to all major civilizations, but the question is, is that sufficient? How do you measure the impact of religious and economic struggles in relation to one another? Is it plausible to assume that every religious struggle, every national struggle is reducible to conflict in economic interests? I doubt it.

Here again we must be aware of accepting the generalization in its totality or rejecting it. It's a question of more or less, it's a question of measurement, it's a question of empirical analysis.

MACHAN: Sometimes Marx seems to suggest that people who defend views other than his—say, the significance and importance of capitalism as an ongoing arrangement in society—are merely expressing the vested interest of the ruling classes. This seems to block debate. It gives an approach to discussing Marx's own ideas so that he can dismiss all criticism as a form of rationalization.

HOOK: I think that point of view is self-refuting because one could then characterize Marx's own views as an expression of alienated intellectuals who look forward to a society in

which they hope to be the ruling class.

I don't believe that Marx relies decisively on this *ad hominem* argument. He believed that his position could be verified in terms of evidence.

It is true that his disciples often resort to this *ad hominem* argument in order to avoid confronting the evidence in appraising the validity or invalidity of the doctrine. But scientifically we have to rule out any attribution of motives. It's like answering a man's arguments against vegetarianism by maintaining that he has interests in a meat-packing plant. But the arguments for or against vegetarianism are independent of what causes a person to believe it. We must not confuse the psychological causes of belief with the grounds of belief.

MACHAN: Yet that elementary fallacy seems to permeate some of the discussions because it seems that the words *apologist*, *reactionary*, and *ideologue* are part and parcel of the discussion of the merits of Marxism or its opposing systems.

HOOK: I think that's unfortunately true. But in terms of his own argument, I'm sure Marx would repudiate the notion that he himself is speaking only for a certain vested interest or a certain group. I think he presents his point of view as one that would have a universal appeal to anyone who's prepared to look at the evidence. I'm prepared to examine the evidence, and I find that a great deal of Marx is sound and great deal is unsound. To use a phrase of Engels's, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and that means actually the evidence must decide.

MACHAN: Let me go back to this notion of class conflict. One of the most cataclysmic events of the past few centuries was the American Revolution. It certainly changed the face of geopolitical arrangements in the world. Yet it doesn't seem that class conflict had any role in it whatsoever. Is that correct?

HOOK: I think there certainly was a class conflict in the American Revolution. It was not so much between the workers and the employers as between the merchants in England and the merchants and farmers in the United States.

Marx certainly recognized that there are conflicts *within* the classes. There's a conflict between those who want to sell tomato juice to the American public and those who want to sell orange juice, but over and above that conflict is the much more fundamental conflict between those who own the instruments of production and those who work for the owners. Most of the owners have an economic interest in keeping the level of wages low, if only to reduce their costs.

MACHAN: That's one of the reasons I mentioned the American Revolution; presumably if such an important event can't be fully analyzed in terms of economic class-conflict, then there is a flaw in that analysis.

HOOK: I don't believe anything in human affairs can be "fully analyzed" in terms of something else. To do justice to Marx I think we have to extend his notion of economics to include the conflict of interests among the various sections of the ruling class.

MACHAN: What about the current conflicts that permeate the geopolitical atmosphere, say between the Palestinians and the Israelis, between Northern Ireland and England, between

the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, and inside the borders of India? Can this all be analyzed in terms of class conflict?

HOOK: I wouldn't deny that economic class-conflict and the conflicts of economic interests enter into those antagonisms and operations. If there were no oil in the near East, there would be less interest and conflict about that area. But I certainly would not say that an attempt to interpret Irish or Israeli history exclusively or predominantly in those terms would be satisfactory. Here, as elsewhere, Marx overlooked the importance of other factors.

I think that the development of nationalism can account for what has sometimes been called the relative failure of Marxism in the West. In the *Manifesto* Marx actually maintains that the workers of the world have no homeland. But this has been systematically disproved by the existence of World Wars I and II.

After all, World War I was carried on by the working classes of the various nations and they were very enthusiastic, which indicates again that we must qualify Marx's generalizations. As I have already pointed out, all history is not the history of class struggle. Sometimes it's the history of class collaboration; sometimes it's the history of class cooperation—for instance, when a community is threatened by disaster.

I think one must approach this whole problem of class analysis case by case, and ask how to measure the relative strength of economic class-consciousness over national or religious class-consciousness. I would maintain that on some crucial occasions economic class-consciousness would be overriding, but on other occasions that's not true.

MACHAN: So in a way this usefulness of economic-class analysis both for purposes of understanding a past and of anticipating the future is somewhat limited?

HOOK: It is limited, but I think Marx made a major contribution in calling attention to the importance of these class conflicts, because until his time—with the exception of some French historians—people interpreted history merely in political terms. But Marx maintained that if you examine the struggles of political power you will very often find that economic interests are at stake, that property itself, as the *social* instrument of production, is a form of power over human beings.

Marx has no objection to personal property, such as clothing, home, utensils, and so on. He was interested, however, in the social instruments of production, and he tried to show that property in this area entailed a very real power over the lives of human beings. The analysis is quite simple, after all.

How do we know that we have property rights to anything? Not in terms of the right to use it—if you can't use it society will not enforce your right. You know you have a property right to anything only in terms of your right, through the law or state, to deny access to others. Human beings have to use land in order to live; if you own the land, then the power to exclude people from such land as they need gives you power over their lives. And Marx seemed to recognize that this is true even if the land is owned by the community. There would still be power over the people who could be

excluded from it. But he was hostile to the private ownership of social instruments of production because he thought that the exercise of that power wasn't being responsibly carried out.

MACHAN: Marx writes a great deal about exploitation—it is probably one of his ideas that has consciously or unconsciously been accepted within the wider community. People who are not Marxists talk about the exploitation of the working classes, of those in the Third World and the like. Exploitation is a class phenomenon, is it not?

HOOK: Yes. In Marx's analysis, in every class society the very fact that one group owns the instruments of production and the other has to work them entails a conflict over the distribution of the social product.

MACHAN: Do class conflict and exploitation go hand in hand, or does this occur only in capitalism?

HOOK: Obviously exploitation takes place under slavery and feudalism. Marx prided himself on claiming that he had solved the mystery of how profit is achieved in a free-enterprise society.

MACHAN: I take that to mean private profit, since according to Marx there's a surplus even in socialism and communism.

HOOK: That's true. But in Marx's view, even in socialist society the worker never gets the full product of his toil, but what he doesn't get is distributed socially in various ways. And, indeed, his emphasis upon exploitation in capitalist society followed from his theory of value and surplus value.

Most economists have rejected Marx's theory of value because of internal difficulties. The actual rate of exploitation in an industry that is carried on by intensive labor would in his analysis lead to more profit than the profit that you get in an industry that is carried on mostly by constant capital or by its own machinery. But it turns out that the rate of profit is independent of the amount of labor or the labor power involved in the industry.

That's a contradiction that occurred in the first volume, published by Marx in 1865. For nineteen years he didn't publish any other books. Engels tried to solve this contradiction when he published the second and third volumes, but most economists have rejected his theory of value. Also there's no clue in it to the variations of the business cycle.

In the last analysis Marx uses the word *exploitation* to indicate that distribution of the social product is not done equitably or democratically.

MACHAN: It is then a morally laden word in this sense?

HOOK: I regard it as such, although Marx himself claimed that it was not a moral term, it was merely a descriptive term of how a commodity-producing system works regardless of the intentions or morals of individual capitalists.

Liberty

MACHAN: There's this persistent puzzle in discussions of Marxism versus the philosophical (or ideological or political) traditions in the West concerning the notion of liberty. Marxists are for the liberation of the workers, the downtrodden. But of course the American political system

proudly announces its allegiance to liberty and freedom. And yet these two outlooks seem to be diametrically opposed in matters of policy. Perhaps we need to discuss what they mean by freedom. Surely they don't mean the same thing—or do they?

HOOK: Certainly, Marx heralded the freedoms of the American Revolution and of the French Revolution as a basis for other freedoms. That is to say, he certainly would accept the justification of government based upon consent; he would argue that all social institutions that affect human beings should be determined by the consent of those who are affected by it. What he was trying to do, as I understand it, was to extend this area of democratic self-determination to other institutions of society, particularly to economic institutions. Just as he was opposed to political monopoly, he was opposed to excess of economic power as undermining the operation of a political freedom.

MACHAN: But Marx is not talking about the freedom of free enterprise where individuals are autonomous in deciding how they will contribute to the productive process.

HOOK: I don't think that in any system individuals can be completely autonomous in determining what they're going to produce or when or how. In the heyday of free enterprise there were all sorts of restrictions upon the freedom of enterprise; there were always certain things that you were not allowed to produce or sell.

MACHAN: We know that some of these views depart from reality. Yet at least the ideal of a free-market capitalist system is one in which the primary ingredient is that other people—including other groups, one's neighbors, one's political community—do not determine what one does with one's labor and belongings. Whereas in Marx, one's labor and belongings become socialized. They become part of the entire community and so any sort of independent judgment concerning the allocations of these flies out the window.

HOOK: Marx would assert that the operation of the free-enterprise system, even as you've described it, often interferes with the freedom of others. In the emergence of monopolies certainly the freedom to compete is affected. He would argue against the notion that freedom is absolute.

I would point out that all situations create conflicts of freedoms that must be resolved; Marx would maintain that these must be resolved in such a way as to preserve the maximum structure of freedoms. No particular freedom can be absolute, even in our own system.

MACHAN: I believe that Marx's conception of freedom is more in the tradition of allowing individuals the freedom to grow to their full potentials, which means that they must be provided with the necessities for this growth. Whereas in the system that seems to be opposed to Marx—say the Lockean system—growth is supposed to be achieved by individuals via their interaction with nature and with their consenting fellow human beings. No such provision is supposed to be established politically. That boils down to the negative conception of freedom of the American political tradition, as distinct from the positive conception of freedom of Hegel, Marx, T.H. Green, and some others.

HOOK: I think Marx's view actually transcends that

opposition between negative and positive freedom. Marx certainly would not have accepted the Lockean rule that any freedom is absolute, that there can be an absolute right to property, for instance, regardless of its consequences.

MACHAN: But I don't think that is the issue here. The issue is not absolute versus relative, it's the emphasis.

The Lockean notion of freedom emphasizes one person's freedom *from* the intrusion of another person, whereas the Marxian notion of freedom emphasizes one person's freedom *to* pursue ends for which it may be necessary to supply various means that are produced by other people. For example: If I am unhealthy I am not free to do what I want to do, and in order to make me free doctors have to provide me with medical care. This is a limitation on the Lockean freedom in order to secure for me the Marxian freedom.

HOOK: Yes, that would be a correct interpretation of Marx, and Marx, as I interpret him, would justify it on the ground that freedom of this kind can only be achieved by the preservation of political freedom and of a political democracy and the structures that are built on that.

Marxism and Secular Humanism

MACHAN: Today certain kinds of controversies appear on the culture scene; one of these is the conflict between a religious understanding of American history and a secular humanist understanding of American history. Some people claim—and have even taken this to the courts—that secular humanism has had an extraordinary influence on our understanding of history. Is this secular humanism the humanism that some people mention in connection with Marxism?

HOOK: Not as I understand it. I think secular humanism is an indigenous American development that flows from the erosion of religious belief, and the discovery that moral judgment is autonomous of religion. What makes an event or an action good or bad, or right or wrong, is not a supernatural command from on high, but the inherent character of the act and the consequences of that action on human weal and woe.

So secular humanists may be Marxist or anti-Marxist. After all, one of the leading secular humanists in this country, Robert Ingersoll, was certainly no Marxist. I think it would be a great error to try to interpret secular humanism as a manifestation of any influence of Marxism whatsoever.

MACHAN: So what is it that Marx has influenced in our culture? How does he relate to our culture? There's a great deal of concern about Marxism—some people think of him as the worst part of human history and they fear and denounce him. Other people admire Marx; many intellectuals are very respectful of his ideas. What is the actual impact of Marxism in our society?

HOOK: Let's face it—most people today unfortunately tend to identify Marxism with the theory and practice of Soviet Communism. Most people are unaware that some of the leading Marxists of the twentieth century—for example Karl Kautsky, the German Social Democrats, and so on—were bitterly opposed to the Communists, who actually held them responsible for the failure of the Western countries to introduce

any socialist revolutions.

In fact when the Communists seized power in Russia, they did so expecting that there would be a socialist revolution in the West. They didn't expect to hold on to power.

Marx thought of socialism as an international society rather

Marxism has no future. It has been irretrievably compromised by the Communists, who created in its name the cruelest and vastest system of human oppression. The irony is that Marx himself, regardless of the validity of his ideas, was a fighter for human freedoms.

than as a national one. The socialist revolution in the West didn't materialize, and so under Stalin the Communists dedicated themselves to building a new kind of class society, a totalitarian terroristic system in which in effect the Communist Party was a giant corporation that owned the economy, and they sought by all means to undermine, absorb, or dominate other countries. This of course produced natural resentment and fear, so that very few people are prepared to examine Marx's doctrines independently of the way in which Lenin and his followers interpreted him.

Marx's Influence

MACHAN: Do you think there's a legacy of Marxian ways of understanding, for example, the influence of poverty on people's ability to reach some sort of success in our society? Or are our ideas in this regard so general that you cannot really credit Marx with them?

HOOK: I believe that such views primarily derived from other sources. After all, the whole sociological approach to society, beginning with Comte—whom Marx criticized rather unsympathetically—stressed the social factors. That is to say that the emphasis upon nurture, in the nature/nurture controversy, goes back before Marx. Those who are influenced by Marx have a tendency to try to interpret the social influence in economic terms. A Marxist environmentalist tends to have a narrower view of the environment. It's perfectly possible for an individual to believe in social reform and social progress, and yet not be a Marxist.

MACHAN: So in a way you are saying that Western and especially American culture today really is free of a significant dosage of Marxist influence.

HOOK: I think it would be fair to say that there's no evidence of a pervasive influence of Marxism on American life. Even the American labor movement has never been sympathetic to explicitly organized socialist political parties.

MACHAN: In contrast to the British labor movement?

HOOK: In contrast to the British labor movement, in contrast to the German labor movement, the French labor movement, the Italian labor movement. There's a standing problem as to why the American labor movement is not and

never has been socialist in its orientation or its aspiration.

MACHAN: But isn't it the case that the pervasive contrast between labor and capital that has entered into our culture has outstripped its usefulness because of the Marxist frame of reference to which it owes some debt?

HOOK: The odd thing about it is that the intensity of the labor/capital conflict in the United States was fiercer here than in Europe, and despite the intensity of that conflict where strikes almost became occasions of civil war, there was no political expression of that. And then the American labor movement organized its support on behalf of the New Deal.

MACHAN: The democratic aspect of Marxism would indicate that it is really in this country, which is more responsive to democratic pressures, that a certain kind of socialism is emerging. A kind of homage to Marx is emerging here that maintains that the Soviet Union's Marxism is fraudulent. The growing socialization of property in America may be the genuine Marxist expression.

HOOK: I doubt that, unless one is prepared to say that the welfare state here and abroad is an expression of Marxism. My view is that the democratic ideal and its moral values modified the operation of capitalism as an economic system and gave us the welfare state or mixed economy, in which it is not a question of either socialism or capitalism but more or less one or the other from time to time.

But I can imagine someone maintaining that the unfinished task of democracy in the United States is being fulfilled along the original democratic Marxist lines. I don't think that's altogether true because the economic class struggle in this country is overlaid with other struggles, religious, racial, regional, that can't be reduced merely to economics. So that you have a coat of many different colors and tendencies.

What is unique about the American culture is that the operation of economic forces takes place here without any feudal traditions, in an atmosphere where there's no sense of class, where it can be argued, as the young Leon Sampson once argued, that the whole notion of open-ended Americanism has replaced traditional forms of socialism.

I still remember a time in this country when if you said that we live in a class society you would be regarded as subversive—whereas in Europe if you said that society was classless, you would be regarded as subversive. The notion of belonging to a class is taken for granted in Europe largely because of the heritage of feudalism and what followed it. But in the United States the notion of class and the identification of class are relatively new. There always have been classes and class struggles here, but there has been reluctance to recognize the polarizing and differentiating factors in the light of the belief that we were all created morally equal and should have an equal opportunity to improve ourselves. There was a period when Americans had unlimited land, and virtually unlimited opportunities to carve out careers for themselves. That came to an end, of course, in the twentieth century. But the ideology—some people say the mythology—of the past still plays a role.

When I was a child, I was asked what I wanted to do when I grew up. Well, I wanted to be president of the United States, as did practically every little boy in the slum where

we lived. That consciousness played a role that is absent in Europe. Maybe I'm mistaken, but I can't think of a country in Europe where the children of the proletariat, when asked about their future, would respond in this way. An illusion, of course, you may say. But illusions and myths have real social and historical effects. And when we probe we find that they grow out of some hard realities.

MACHAN: One final question. Has Marx's Marxism spent itself? In contrast to my own reading of Marx, whereby he comes off as a deterministic dialectical materialist, you seem to regard him as an idealist of sorts. Has its idealism been so squandered and compromised that it can't recover? In your view does Marxism still have a future?

HOOK: No, Marxism certainly has no future in the United States and probably has no future elsewhere. It has been irretrievably compromised by the Communists, who in the name of Marxism created the cruelest and vastest system of human oppression in recorded history. The irony is that Marx himself, regardless of the validity of his ideas, was a fighter for human freedoms.

To be sure, there are many who profess to be Marxists of a sort, *Marxisant*, the French would say, in our institutions of higher education. As a rule they are profoundly ignorant of Marx's ideas, the grounds for and against them, and the extent to which they were corrupted, revised, and vulgarized by Bolshevik-Leninism and Maoism. They call themselves Marxists as a sign of their political commitment to any current anti-American cause in foreign policy. Marx would have despised them for their glorification of those whom he scorned as the lumpen proletariat rather than to the organized democratic working class. The history of these intellectuals, to stretch the term, as of their European confreres in the past, has been a succession of pilgrimages to the Communist shrines of Moscow, Peking, Hanoi, Havana, and now Managua. What they call their "counter-culture" is little more than an uncritical critique of the American establishment, in all its aspects, whose largesse nurtures them. True intellectuals must never become poet laureates of the status quo, but they must know the differences between better and worse, the direction in which a society is developing, and the options open to it.

The eclipse of Marx's thought to a point where it is ignored is a great pity. Marx's works, especially his noneconomic writings, are worth reading. We can still learn from him as we can from Max Weber, Vilfredo Pareto, and other great and influential thinkers of the past. We can also learn from the history of Marxism. The greatest revisionist of Marxism, it seems to me, was Edward Bernstein, whose stature has grown over the years. He was the first Marxist to submit Marx's ideas to scientific analysis. Had he supplemented his criticism with the philosophy of John Dewey instead of Immanuel Kant, the synthesis would have exercised greater influence.

I am more interested in problems than in labels. I define socialism today independently of Marx and the Marxist tradition, as "democracy as a way of life," as John Dewey understood that phrase. This opens a new set of positions and problems, which I have sought to clarify elsewhere. ●

SUMMER HOLIDAY SEMINAR

What Is Secular Humanism?

Thursday, August 17 to Sunday, August 20, 1989
at the State University of New York at Buffalo, Amherst Campus

Topics will include Secular Humanism and Human Sexuality, Secular Humanism in its Historical Perspective, Secular Humanism and Atheism, and Secular Humanism and Self-Determination. A suggested reading list will be announced. All registrants will receive a certificate of achievement after completing the seminar. Seminar leaders include:

Paul Kurtz, Professor of Philosophy, State University of New York at Buffalo;
Editor, *FREE INQUIRY*

Vern Bullough, Dean of Natural and Social Sciences, State University of New York
College at Buffalo

Tom Flynn, Co-Editor, *Secular Humanist Bulletin*

Tom Franczyk, Co-Editor, *Secular Humanist Bulletin*

Tim Madigan, Executive Editor, *FREE INQUIRY*

Jean Millholland, Executive Director, Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism

THURSDAY, AUGUST 17

- 2:00 P.M.-5:00 P.M. **Seminar Session**
5:00 P.M.-7:30 P.M. **Dinner** (On your own)
7:30 P.M.-9:00 P.M. **Cocktail Reception, Marriott Hotel**

FRIDAY, AUGUST 18

- 9:00 A.M.-12 NOON **Seminar Session**
12 NOON-2:00 P.M. **Luncheon**
2:00 P.M.-5:00 P.M. **Seminar Session**
6:00 P.M.-9:00 P.M. **Banquet**

SATURDAY, AUGUST 19

- 9:00 A.M.-12 NOON **Seminar Session**
12:00 NOON-7:00 P.M. **Visit to Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, for Shaw Festival, featuring *Man and Superman***

SUNDAY, AUGUST 20

- 9:00 A.M.-6 P.M. **Visit to Dresden, New York, birthplace of Robert G. Ingersoll. Includes Brunch and Seminar Session at Belhurst Castle, Geneva, New York**

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Is John Demjaniuk really “Ivan the Terrible”? Yes, say five identification experts.

Mechanic of Death: The Case of “Ivan the Terrible”

Joe Nickell and John F. Fischer

During 1942 and 1943 they arrived at Treblinka, some fifty miles east of Warsaw, in daily trainloads—Jewish families being “resettled,” they were told, and taking with them only the possessions they could carry. Had they looked more closely, they could have seen that the “transfer station” was something quite different: a single track ran by the platform, and the hands on the big station-house clock were painted on.¹

But as they emerged from the boxcars, the Nazi SS guards hurried them along, men steered one way, women and children another.² Inside the “station” they found themselves in a barracks where they were ordered to strip naked. They were then herded into a large room with benches, where their hair was shorn. (Later it would be baled and used to make felt for the war effort.) Already their possessions were being sorted: fountain pens here; eyeglasses there; valuables, cash, clothing, each in its place, soon to be shipped to Germany. Scrapbooks and photographs were burned.

They were driven outside, naked parents carrying naked children in their arms, whipped, urged at a panic-pace by rifle butts and snarling dogs down a ninety-meter path the Nazis dubbed *Himmelweg*, “The Road to Heaven.” At the end of the path, out of sight around a bend, was their final destination: a forbidding stone structure. They were brutally driven inside by two Ukrainians: Ivan and an assistant, Nikolai.

What happened next was described by a survivor of

Treblinka, writing before the end of the war:

The bedlam lasted only a short while, for soon the door[s] were slammed shut. The chamber was filled, the motor turned on and connected with the inflow pipes and, within 25 minutes at the most, all lay stretched out dead or, to be more accurate, were standing up dead. Since there was not an inch of free space, they just leaned against each other.

Even in death, mothers held their children tightly in their arms. There were no more friends or foes. There was no more jealousy. All were equal. There was no longer any beauty or ugliness, for they all were yellow from the gas.³

After the mass execution, the so-called work Jews were forced to drag out the bodies, remove the gold teeth, and push the wagon-loaded corpses to the pits. Originally they were simply dumped and covered with lime and sand, but a more efficient disposal system was needed. Therefore, a “grill” was fashioned from railroad tracks and the bodies were burned, producing a perpetual haze over the Polish landscape.

Ivan—who had actually volunteered for the gruesome work in order to get out of a POW camp—served at Treblinka for more than a year, during which perhaps as many as a million Jews were executed in this cowardly fashion. Ivan served as a mechanic, maintaining and repairing the motor that pumped the carbon monoxide into the death chambers.

According to contemporary descriptions—including one taken from the 1945 diary of a camp survivor—Ivan was about twenty-five years old; was tall and muscular; and had eyes that “seemed kind and gentle.”⁴ However, he was a sadist, known to hack off an ear or split skulls with a gas pipe he brandished. Since the work-Jews did not know his last name, they called him *Ivan Grozny*, “Ivan the Terrible,” after a former Russian czar who had killed countless Jews.

After the war Ivan disappeared, and over the next three decades his whereabouts were unknown. However, in 1975 the name of a man living in Cleveland appeared on a list of suspected Ukrainian war criminals supplied by an informant (a Ukrainian living in the United States). Two years later the Immigration and Naturalization Service included the man’s picture in a photospread (or “photo lineup”) sent to Israel for the case of Feodor Fedorenko, a former guard at the Polish death camp. At the time, the Cleveland man was not even suspected of having been at Treblinka; his photo was

Joe Nickell, former investigator for a world-famous detective agency, is best known for his solution to the Shroud of Turin forgery. He is a collector of antique writing materials and documents, and is a member of the Manuscript Society as well the International Association of Master Penmen, Engrossers, and Teachers of Handwriting.

John F. Fischer is a forensic analyst in a Florida crime laboratory whose fields of expertise include microchemical and instrumental analyses. He is also president of a corporation specializing in forensic research, especially in the field of laser technology. His articles have appeared in such publications as Identification News and Law Enforcement Technology.

merely included as one of seven extras to complete the lineup.

Nevertheless, in Israel, Elijah Rosenberg, who had escaped from Treblinka in a 1943 uprising, carefully studied the photospread while an investigator from the Nazi War Crimes Unit of the Israel National Police waited patiently. Soon Rosenberg identified Fedorenko; then he pointed to another photo: this was Ivan from Treblinka, he said.

No, the investigator replied, based on the information he had, the man had not been at Treblinka. But Rosenberg was adamant: "I'm identifying him," he insisted. However, he added, "The picture is not precisely the way I saw him in Treblinka; it seems to me this photograph is—more mature."⁵

Indeed, the photograph was taken eight years after Rosenberg and Ivan had been at the death camp, and was used for the 1951 visa application of John Demjanjuk. Two other Treblinka survivors were summoned to Israeli police headquarters to study the photospread. Independently, each looked at eight pictures, then pointed to the one Rosenberg had selected. Each identified it as that of Ivan from Treblinka.

As it turned out, Demjanjuk had anglicized his first name; he had been born Ivan Demjanjuk at Dub Macharenzi in the Ukraine, in 1920. A big, beefy fellow, he matched the description of Ivan from Treblinka; and, curiously, as if he had simply resumed his former livelihood, he was working as a motor mechanic at the Ford Motor Company plant in Cleveland.

Moreover, he had lied about his background when he immigrated to America, covering up his Russian military service and subsequent capture by the Germans with the claim that he had been a farmer—in Poland—during the war.

In 1981, Demjanjuk was given a chance to explain his reason for lying. The opportunity arose when the United States Department of Justice prosecuted him in federal court in Cleveland, seeking to revoke his American citizenship. Testifying in Ukrainian, through an interpreter, Demjanjuk said he had been motivated by fear of repatriation: "Because I had been a soldier in the Red Army and there was a regulation that if you were going to be taken prisoner of war, you had to shoot yourself, and I hadn't done so."⁶

However, the prosecution attempted to show, by the testimony of various federal officials, that by 1951—when his visa had been granted—Demjanjuk had little cause to fear repatriation. (In fact, Demjanjuk admitted that his "strongest fear" had been during 1945 to 1947.) On the other hand, he would have had an obvious motive for lying if he had been on the staff of a Nazi death camp: No such person would have been eligible to receive a displaced-person visa for admittance to the United States. Indeed, defection to the Nazis could have provided a real reason to fear repatriation.

Demjanjuk fared even worse when he attempted to account for his whereabouts during the war, especially the critical period between the summer of 1942 and the fall of 1943, the time when "Ivan the Terrible" was exterminating Jews at Treblinka. Under sustained cross-examination, Demjanjuk was often reduced to saying, "I don't know" or "I can't say exactly."⁷ He committed a serious blunder when he repeatedly maintained that he had been a prisoner at the POW camp at Chelm, Poland, until October 1944. Actually the camp

had been abandoned ten months before, as an expert established—thus discrediting Demjanjuk's alibi.

More than six years later—after he had been stripped of his American citizenship, deported to Israel, and placed on trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity—Demjanjuk was still blaming his faulty memory, together with his fourth-grade education, for what the Associated Press termed "contradictions in his testimony about his whereabouts during the war." In the course of a week-long cross-examination, he said, "My tragic mistake is I can't think properly. I don't know how to answer."⁸

The most incriminating evidence against Ivan/John Demjanjuk—presented at both trials—was an SS identification card, bearing what appeared to be his photograph and signature. It surfaced as a result of the efforts of Allan A. Ryan, Jr., who became a "Nazi hunter" in 1979 when he took command of the U.S. Department of Justice's newly created Office of Special Investigations (OSI). When Ryan inherited the INS file on Demjanjuk and discovered that three Treblinka survivors had identified him from a photospread, he cabled Moscow. Ryan knew that in 1944 the Soviets had captured the SS facility, Trawniki, where death-camp guards had been trained, and he thought the Soviets might have retained the captured records.

In January of 1980 the OSI received from the Soviet archives a photocopy of the incriminating Trawniki ID card. Together with the name Ivan Demjanjuk was the information that he was born on April 3, 1920, that his father's name was Nikoli, and that he had a scar on his back. All were true of John Demjanjuk, as he admitted in U.S. federal court, but he was evasive. Was it his signature? "I don't think so." His photograph? "I cannot say. Possibly it is me."

Because the eyewitness Rosenberg (who had picked him out of the photospread in Israel) had testified that Ivan's eyes had been gray, Demjanjuk's attorney queried his client:

"What color are your eyes?"

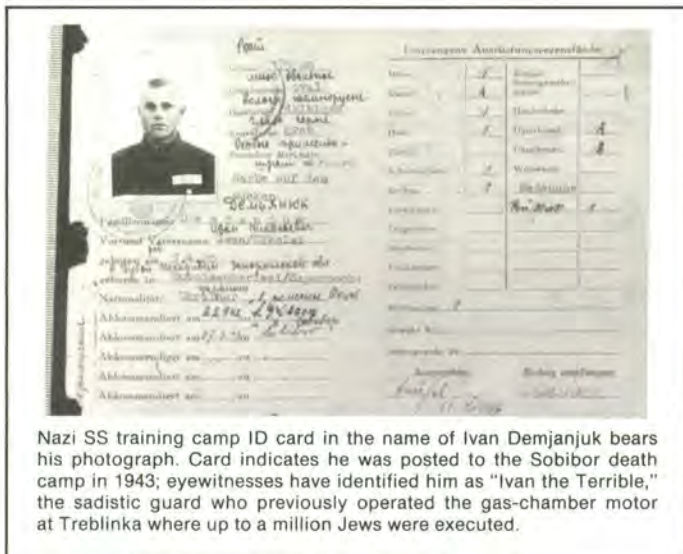
"Blue."

"What color were your eyes in 1942?"

"Blue."



Photograph from a Nazi SS identification card (left) has been identified by death-camp survivors as that of "Ivan the Terrible." A few years later the face has become somewhat less muscular and the hairline is receding a bit, as shown by the photo from a 1947 driver's license (right) issued to Ivan (now John) Demjanjuk.



Nazi SS training camp ID card in the name of Ivan Demjanjuk bears his photograph. Card indicates he was posted to the Sobibor death camp in 1943; eyewitnesses have identified him as "Ivan the Terrible," the sadistic guard who previously operated the gas-chamber motor at Treblinka where up to a million Jews were executed.

However, a prosecuting attorney returned to the issue on cross-examination:

"This card indicates that the Ivan Demjanjuk has gray eyes. You indicated to your attorney that you have always had blue eyes, is that correct?"

"Yes."

"Do you see the color of the eyes in this visa application?" (He handed Demjanjuk the application bearing his signature.)

"I don't see it."

"Let me help you." (He pointed to the place.) "Would you tell us the color of the eyes in this visa application?"

"Gray."⁹

When we were asked to become involved in the case, it was the question of the ID card's authenticity that most intrigued us. In mid-August 1987, an agent for the family called from Toronto to ask if we would be willing to receive a packet of materials relating to the prosecution of Demjanjuk, and to suggest the possibility of our writing an investigative article. We agreed, and were subsequently put in touch with Demjanjuk's son-in-law, Edward Nishnic, who is president of the John Demjanjuk Defense Fund.

After acquainting ourselves with the basic facts in the case of "Ivan the Terrible"—that the sadistic mechanic who operated the gas-chamber motors at the Treblinka death camp had reportedly been identified by eyewitnesses and an incriminating ID card—we opened our review-investigation.

We focused on the Nazi identification card, a five-by-seven-inch document folded in half. Clearly, if it were authentic it would mean that, during the time of the atrocities at Treblinka, Ivan/John Demjanjuk was neither farming in Poland (as he had told American immigration officials), nor was he confined in concentration camps (as he later maintained, albeit with contradictions). The concurrent claim—that he had served in 1944 with a so-called Russian Army of Liberation unit established by the Germans—was essentially irrelevant, doing little more than proving that Demjanjuk had been, in fact, a member of at least one Nazi unit.¹⁰

The ID card would actually place him at Trawniki, a former sugar factory the SS had transformed into a training compound for death-camp guards.¹¹ This would be damning indeed.

On the other hand, Demjanjuk's defenders—notably the conservative columnist Patrick J. Buchanan—have suggested that that card was the product of a Soviet "KGB forgery factory." It was supposedly made to order to fulfill the American request for information about Demjanjuk. But why would the Soviets wish to frame an innocent U.S. autoworker who, Buchanan admits, "was neither an outspoken anti-communist, nor a leader in the American-Ukrainian community"? Buchanan concedes this is an "excellent question," but apparently forgets he raised it as he meanders on to the end of his article.¹²

The consensus among Demjanjuk defenders seems to be the notion advanced during his Jerusalem trial. As *Time* reported: "The defense contends that the card is a forgery by the Soviet KGB as part of an effort to harass the Ukrainian community in the U.S."¹³ Another suggestion was that the card was forged so that "at a later date" the Soviets would "seriously embarrass Israel" (as if they would not seriously embarrass themselves in the process).¹⁴

We began our study of the matter with the photograph on the ID card, to determine whether it was indeed that of the accused war criminal. We had available to us color enlargements of the front and back of the card, plus a much larger black-and-white blowup of the photo it bore. For comparison, we possessed authenticated photographs of the accused—notably, one from his 1947 German driver's license and another from his 1958 naturalization certificate, plus other related materials, including a videotape produced for the Israeli prosecution.

In addition to our own analyses—which included a close comparison as well as an overlay of photo-transparencies—we submitted the photographs to five specialists.¹⁵ Each had backgrounds in some aspect of facial identification.

The first two—a police commander, Lt. Drexel T. Neal, and a detective, Sgt. Raleigh S. Pate—were experienced in "Identikit" facial-feature comparisons, police lineups, and the like.¹⁶ Each expressed his strong belief that the photos represented the same individual, citing various details of the features in support.

Our third specialist was Glenn Taylor, a professional portrait artist of many years' experience who has assisted us in several important cases. His feature-by-feature comparison was quite detailed, calling attention to such factors as "pronounced central nasal-laboid groove," "degree of lip eversion," and the like, as well as the "general relationship of features to each other," all of which, he concluded, indicated that the photos depicted "the same man at three different ages." Taylor noted that "the greater mass of the jaw musculature shown in the earlier photo" (that on the ID card) was probably "attributable to the pronounced muscle tone of a youthful and active man."¹⁷ (Recall that the Nazi, Ivan, at Treblinka, had been described in a survivor's diary as particularly "muscular."¹⁸)

The fourth expert, Dr. Virginia Smith, is an anthropologist

with expertise in reconstructing faces from human skulls. She stated:

The soft tissue configuration of the face and ears, and the progressive pattern baldness lead me to conclude that the three photographs represent the same individual. This opinion, however, is made without the more conclusive comparison of the hard tissue.

The faces represented in these photographs could conform to a single skull structure. This structure is characterized by heavy brow development that is aligned in the same manner with nasal bones in all of the photographs. All photographs show broad zygomatic arches, and a slightly higher right orbital arch. The right orbit is also slightly larger in all photographs.¹⁹

We regarded this determination of distinctively similar bone structure exhibited in the questioned and known photographs as particularly evidential.

Finally, because of the high identification value of the human ear—the configurations of which are quite distinctive (albeit less so than fingerprint patterns)—we contacted an internationally known expert in the field. Alfred V. Iannarelli is the developer of a system of identification bearing his name and has been consulted in such celebrated identification cases as those of Martin Borman, Anastasia, Lindbergh, the two “Will Wests,” and Lee Harvey Oswald’s alleged “double.” He wrote:

In reference to the Demjanjuk case of identity, I have thoroughly examined the photographs and transparencies utilizing my system of ear identification and have come to the conclusion that the ears on these photographs are all of the same individual. In addition, it is my opinion that the photograph on the identification card is *not* a Soviet forgery, but indeed, that of Mr. Demjanjuk. . . .

My congratulations to the photographer who made the photographic enlargements of Demjanjuk; the contrast and details were excellent. Each photo clearly illustrates the anatomical structure of the subject’s left ear, permitting me to make the comparison and identification *without any hesitation or doubt*. The protrusion of Demjanjuk’s left ear in all the photographs was sufficiently pronounced and producing details of each ear image with sufficient contrast that it was not necessary to use the method I used in the Lindbergh identity case such as the Computer Image Enhancement process or the Sobel Edge Detection technique.²⁰

Because Iannarelli is also an expert in identification photographs, we subsequently asked him to review an analysis of the photos that had been done for the Israeli prosecution, and to comment on the possibility of their having been retouched. He replied, “I have carefully reviewed Reinhardt Altmans’s analysis and I concur with his findings. He certainly did a fine job in photographic comparison and the physiognomics index. . . . I could not detect any evidence of photographic retouching, [and] I could find no evidence of tampering with the ID photograph either with the facial features or the clothing.”²¹

The issue of retouching has become important, since an expert in document examination, William Flynn, has stated

that “the ‘Demjanjuk photograph’ on the ID card contains the same featureless, white background as typically results from airbrushing.” Of course, in what is probably a ratio of millions to one, so do countless genuine photographs. But Flynn also calls attention to a misalignment of the photo with the rubber-stamp seals that overlap onto it, as well as evidence that the photo had twice been glued to the card, and that a set of staple holes indicate (since there are no corresponding holes in the card itself) that the photo was once attached to another document.²²

However, Flynn seems unaware that—instead of having a plausible theory—he has pieces of two very different scenarios. One hypothesizes that a genuine photo of Demjanjuk’s face could have been superimposed onto the face of a man in a German uniform, but such work would have required rephotographing a doctored original, or creating a new print from altered negatives.²³ Either way, the resulting new photograph would have no staple holes. Moreover, the famous McCrone Associates laboratory found that the photographic paper was consistent with archival samples of 1941 to 1943 supplied by a German photographic firm. Actually the most likely explanation for the staple holes is that the photograph had been temporarily affixed to an *application* for the identification card—a common practice with many passport and other photos.²⁴

The second of Flynn’s theories regards the misalignment and regluing of the photo—but their cause is quite apparent. The similar Trawniki cards available for comparison had loose or even missing photos containing yellowed smears of glue where they had fallen off. Gideon Epstein, a senior forensic-document analyst with the United States Department of the Treasury, testified that, when he examined the card at the time of Demjanjuk’s first trial in 1987,

. . . the photograph was loose enough to move with your hand, so that you could get some sort of play into the photograph. And . . . with this type of movement I was able to correctly align the seal so that there was exact alignment. In my 1987 examination . . . I found that the photograph was very firmly affixed so that it could not be moved.²⁵

In other words, between the two trials someone—likely the card’s Soviet custodian—had reglued the loose photo to prevent its dropping off like others had.

We had considered using a computer technique to analyze the photograph, but determined that our time would be better spent on the larger question of forgery. After all, though we had determined that the photograph was positively an authentic one of Ivan/John Demjanjuk, naturally that did not preclude its having been affixed to a forged ID card. And Demjanjuk’s defenders had raised numerous points they believed indicated the card was fraudulent.

For example, there was the matter of the reported death of “Ivan the Terrible,” killed—according to some sources—in a Jewish uprising at Treblinka in August 1943. In fact, no one really knew what had happened to Ivan, who may well have been injured in the fighting.²⁶ Reports of his death, to borrow from Mark Twain, may have been greatly exaggerated.

But during the trial much of the focus was on the damning card itself. There were early attempts to discredit it on the basis of perceived errors in wording; for example, the use of the feminine *Bluse* ("blouse") for the masculine *Hemd* ("shirt"). There were also questions regarding typography when it was found, for instance, that there was an umlat missing over a *u*.²⁷ However, we learned that *Bluse* is actually correct in German military usage for "field jacket," and that other details are probably the result of the card's having been printed in Poland by a non-German printer lacking a German type font.²⁸

Other "evidence" cited by the defense was reminiscent of that presented in the ludicrous case of Lee Harvey Oswald's "double": Demjanjuk's height given on the identification card was in error.²⁹ But as the Oswald case demonstrated, people often have such cards filled in for them by harried clerks looking up from their typewriters; furthermore, some people don't know their correct height, or may misstate it or lie out of vanity. Why would clever KGB forgers not be able to obtain Demjanjuk's correct height from his Soviet Red Army papers, if they were thorough enough to learn of a scar on his back?

Defense attorneys at the sensational trial in Jerusalem carefully cross-examined the prosecution's expert document examiners—Epstein, Amnon Bezalely (an Israeli police examiner with expertise in handwriting, typewriting, printing, and so forth), and Dr. Antonio Cantu (a document examiner with the U.S. Treasury Department and a distinguished expert in the forensic examination of inks, paper, and the like).³⁰

Stated very briefly, the experts' findings were that the card was cheap paper stock consistent with its purported time of issuance (and free of various synthetic fibers, optical brighteners, resins, and other factors introduced into paper after the early 1940s); that its letterpress printing and photograph were likewise consistent; that its typewritten portions were produced on a 1930-series Olympia 12 machine; that the ink for the portions of rubber-stamp impressions that were on the photograph matched those that extended onto the card; and that all of the various inks on the card had analytical (that is, thin-layer-chromatographic) profiles similar to those available in 1942, and none had characteristics of inks manufactured after that time.³¹

The handwriting experts were well aware of the possibility of error in such a case as this. Bezalely actually had experience in detecting Soviet forgeries, and Epstein had written about the Frank Walus case, which had resulted in the persecution of an innocent man as an alleged Nazi war criminal.³² Stated Epstein: "The Walus case, more than anything else, clearly demonstrates the importance of documentary evidence as opposed to eyewitnesses."³³

Nevertheless, the experts determined that the surname-only signatures of Ernst Teufel (the camp quartermaster) and Kurt Streibel (Trawniki commandant) were undoubtedly authentic. They based their conclusions on comparisons—including stereo-microscopic examination—with known exemplars obtained from German archives. As Epstein stated:

In light of the various examinations that I conducted of the document, at the Soviet Embassy, on February 27, 1981, and later of the signatures and the comparison of that writing and identification of the individuals Streibel and Teufel as making those signatures, my conclusion to the overall document is that it is a genuine document, that it does not bear any evidence of being authored, text substituted, or in any way fraudulently prepared. And as a result I feel that the document is what it purports to be, what it purports to represent, and is therefore genuine.³⁴

There were various problems inhibiting authentication of the surname signature "Demjanjuk," including that it was penned in Ukrainian (Cyrillic) characters, that the comparison signatures dated from several years later, and that many of them were in Latin characters written in ballpoint. Nevertheless Bezalely concluded that it lacked the conspicuous indications of forgery and appeared to be "an authentic signature as far as the place in which it was written is concerned."³⁵

We very carefully and critically reviewed all of these findings. Additionally, we made our own assessment of the Teufel and Streibel autographs by comparing color-photo enlargements of those men's signatures. Early on, one retouched stroke of the latter came in for particular scrutiny; however, we determined that it lacked the pattern of frequent and careful retouchings that can point toward forgery and was instead the type of single, bold retouching that is often characteristic of a genuine signature.³⁶ We later learned that microscopic inspection revealed the absence of any suspicious attendant pen-lifts, and that the coarse paper had apparently

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caused the pen to skip, necessitating the quickly jotted retouch.³⁷

In examining the Demjanjuk signature, we considered that Ivan/John was nearly illiterate in 1942, with only a fourth-grade education, and the subsequent effects of modern Western culture with its ancillary demands for frequent name-signings. Since William Flynn has insisted that the signature contains features notably unlike those of Demjanjuk's—the connection of its letters, as well as “a classic swirling, Slavic ‘D’”—shouldn't he instead be asking obvious questions?³⁸ For example, why would sophisticated Soviet forgers, who supposedly had unlimited access to documents (from which to unstaple an incriminating photograph), not copy the *most obvious* features of the signature correctly?

Flynn has concocted a clever scenario. He claims “the only part of the ID card that needed to be forged was the Demjanjuk signature” since the Soviets could have captured a number of blank forms, which they could then fill out at will to incriminate innocent folks.³⁹ Well, not actually blank: The cards would have had to have been *presigned* by Teufel and Streibel.

It is doubtful at this stage that Ivan/John Demjanjuk—convicted by a judicial panel and currently awaiting execution in Israel—will openly confess to the heinous crimes with which he has been charged. (Never mind a televised report that he had already tacitly done so: Supposedly overheard by an Israeli marshal, Demjanjuk was quoted as saying that people did not understand, that he had to do what he did because “It was war.”⁴⁰)

The question for us who wish to know the truth in the matter must therefore become one of the basic approach we take to interpreting the evidence: Do we start with the answer—as his defenders do—that he is innocent, and then work backward to the evidence, concocting one explanation for the eyewitnesses (they are mistaken), another for the incriminating document (it was forged), still another for having lied to the U.S. Immigration officials (he was afraid of repatriation), yet another for his self-contradicting alibi (his memory was faulty), and so on? Such separate rationalizations do not convince.

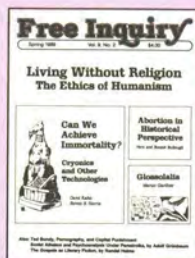
Or do we rather look at the evidence without preconception—no more desirous of convicting an innocent man than of setting a mass-murderer free? If so, we are led from an almost accidental identification in Israel to supportive identifications of a man who was indeed named Ivan, who matched contemporary descriptions, who was working at Ivan's trade of motor mechanic, who had lied about his true whereabouts during the war, who could only manage a blundering and contradictory alibi, who admitted to serving in a Nazi-sponsored unit, and who would turn out to be the subject of an SS identification document authenticated by sophisticated analyses and the testimony of distinguished experts.

Given the preponderance of evidence—the pieces of which interlock, being mutually corroborative—the impartial inquirer can have little doubt as to the guilt of John Demjanjuk. At last, justice has prevailed for the victims of “Ivan the Terrible,” Treblinka's mechanic of death.

Notes

1. Allan A. Ryan, Jr., *Quiet Neighbors: Prosecuting Nazi War Criminals in America* (New York: Harcourt, 1984), 1-6, 94-141. See also Milton Meltzer, *Never to Forget: The Jews of the Holocaust* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 109-111, 115-116, 145, and Robert J. Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 124, 157, 160.
2. The SS (*Schutzstaffel*) was the elite, fanatical Nazi Security Service led by Himmler.
3. Quoted in Ryan, 96-97.
4. *Ibid.*, 96, 102.
5. *Ibid.*, 105.
6. John Demjanjuk, testifying at his 1981 trial in Cleveland, quoted in Ryan, 134.
7. *Ibid.*, 135.
8. “Defense Witnesses ‘Self-destruct,’ Weakening ‘Ivan the Terrible’ Case,” *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Ky.), August 24, 1987.
9. Quoted in Ryan, 133, 136-137.
10. The commander of Demjanjuk's ROA unit testified at his trial. See “j'accuse,” *The Sunday Telegraph* (London), December 13, 1987.
11. Ryan, 100.
12. Patrick J. Buchanan, “Nazi Butcher or Mistaken Identity?” *The Washington Post*, September 28, 1986.
13. William E. Smith, “Trial by Bitter Recollection,” *Time*, March 2, 1987.
14. Reg Little, “Count Slams Treblinka ‘Show Trial,’” *The Oxford Times* (England), April 22, 1988.
15. John F. Fischer made an overlay of the questioned photo and the 1958 one of Demjanjuk; the resulting composite bore strong resemblance to the 1947 photo.
16. Lt. Drexel T. Neal and Sgt. Raleigh S. Pate, Lexington-Fayette Urban County Division of Police, Lexington, Ky., personal communication, August 31, 1987.
17. Glenn Taylor, Lexington, Ky., report dated August 25, 1987.
18. Cited in Part I.
19. Dr. Virginia Smith, University of Kentucky, letter-report to Joe Nickell, November 2, 1987.
20. Alfred V. Iannarelli, letter-report to Joe Nickell, November 14, 1987. (Emphasis added.)
21. Alfred V. Iannarelli, letter to Joe Nickell, December 2, 1987.
22. William Flynn, testimony at trial of Demjanjuk in Israel (criminal case no. 373/86), November 23-25, 1987, Translators' Pool Ltd., 10444-10727; Flynn, “Demjanjuk Is a Victim of a Soviet Forgery,” *Arizona Republic*, July 10, 1988. (There was also a mark on the photo that the defense thought might be made from a paper clip.)
23. *Ibid.*
24. Gideon Epstein, trial testimony (see n. 22), May 7, 1987, 5799-5800.
25. *Ibid.*, May 11, 1987, 5873-5874.
26. Ryan, 100-102.
27. Undated report, “Technical Proof of the Forgery of the ‘Trawniki ID-Card,’” by (name obliterated: a “Senior Research Physicist of the Naval Weapons Center, China Lake, CA.”). Much of the report is an anti-Soviet diatribe.
28. *Langenscheidt's New College German Dictionary* (Berlin: Langenscheidt, 1973), 114. *Bluse* was correctly rendered as “jacket” in an official translation at the Israeli trial, “Exhibit 6 (a).”
29. Buchanan (see n. 3).
30. Gideon Epstein, trial testimony (see n. 22), May 7 and 11, 1987, 5698-5893; Amnon Bezalely, trial testimony (see n. 22), April 21-23, 27, 1987, 4558-5159; Dr. Antonio Cantu, trial testimony (see n. 22), June 24, 1987, 6528-6618.
31. Epstein, Bezalely, and Cantu, trial testimony (see n. 30), *passim*.
32. Bezalely, 4823ff.
33. Gideon Epstein, “The Trawniki Card—The Role of the Forensic Document Examiner in Modern War Crime Trials,” presented to the annual meeting of the American Society of Questioned Document Examiners, Houston, Texas, August 16-20, 1981, 2.
34. Epstein, transcript, 5753.
35. Bezalely, 4699.
36. Albert S. Osborn, *Questioned Documents*, second edition (Montclair, N.J.: Patterson Smith, 1978), 332-333.
37. Epstein, transcript, 5840-5844.
38. Flynn (see n. 13). Flynn's testimony largely paralleled that of another defense expert, Julius Grant, November 9-11, 1987, 9449-9823.
39. *Ibid.*
40. “Headline News” report, Cable News Network, April 21, 1988. ●

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Don't Call Me Brother

How I went from circus ringmaster to Pentecostal televangelist and back again.

Austin Miles

With Edmund D. Cohen

I was raised a Presbyterian in a small mid-western town. There was discussion of God, but mainly there was churchgoing. It was part of the culture there; the church you went to was just as important for your neighbors to know as where you worked. There were times when I enjoyed it and times when I only tolerated it. When I got away from that life and into show business, I got away from religion altogether.

I actually ran away from home as a teenager and joined the circus. I became Kokomo the Clown, and eventually worked my way up to ringmaster. My life there—a terrifically rewarding life, in retrospect—brought me into contact with some born-again Christians who started working to convince me that my life was not so rewarding after all. According to them, because I had never really known Christ, life was going by me without my ever knowing the eternal truth or the real purpose in living.

Bobby Yerkes, a trapeze artist, was one of these people. At one time he had been a drinker, had gotten into fights, and had chased around with lots of women. Contrary to the popular stereotype, that was unusual behavior in the circus, so it made Bobby stand out. Then he became “born-again,” and began telling people that he was reading the Bible and straightening up his life. Everyone watched skeptically as he became more and more pious, preaching to anyone who would listen.

Austin Miles is a ringmaster who appears in selected circus engagements. This article is based on his recent book, Don't Call Me Brother (Prometheus)

Edmund D. Cohen is a lecturer and the author of C. G. Jung and the Scientific Attitude and The Mind of the Bible-Believer.

Bobby had me pretty well convinced. One thing that made a strong impression on me was that he had a pretty even temperament on the performance floor, a place where tense emotions often flare up. He had a sense of peace about him that none of the other performers had. I took it as a testimony to Christianity.

Bobby convinced me that Christianity was totally good, and that I needed it in my life. Later, after I was sucked into Christianity—persuaded that Bobby had the answer—it all began to come out: Bobby had continued in his old ways while presenting his pious side to his co-workers.

Twice Bobby had taken me to Christian businessmen's meetings, but it was obvious that all they cared about was money. Bobby claimed that the reason I kept running into such bad examples of Christianity was that Satan knew that God wanted “to do a work” in my life, and was trying to discourage me. Christians are very good at that sort of double talk.

It's amazing, but when the Christians repeat these things to you over and over, eventually you start to believe it. People are incorrigibly religious; it seems to be almost instinctual. They think there must be something bigger than they are. The Christians especially know how to play on that inbred superstition, to make what they are saying seem to make sense. If you have no clear idea whether there is a God, and these people seem to know so much more than you do, you think, “Maybe they do know something, maybe I am missing it, maybe the devil is trying to get in the way so that I can't know the truth.”

A seeming miraculous healing played a big part in my conversion. I ringmastered a circus in Memphis—it was under canvas—and in the midst of the opening performance a man had a heart attack in

the bleachers; it appeared that his heart had stopped beating. There was no doctor in the audience, so bystanders were pounding on the man's chest, listening for a heartbeat, feeling for a pulse, and shaking their heads in despair.

I had stopped the show and sent someone out to the guard tower to radio for an ambulance. It was quite a serious moment. I could see that people were getting restless, waiting for the ambulance. The tent wasn't big enough for a few people to assist the man off to the side while I went on with the show. We were on the concourse of the Mid-South Fair, where there were plenty of other free attractions and things to do right outside. I just knew that if one person got up to leave, the whole tent would empty out. Just as a matter of showmanship, to keep the people in their seats, I thrust my arm to the audience and said, “Please bow your heads, and each of you, in your own words in your own way, pray earnestly for this man.” All the people in the tent bowed their heads. I felt a strange tingling going through me. In that setting—the people were all concentrating—there was a kind of electric feeling. Well, the man started breathing again just before the ambulance arrived. I did not know the outcome until the next day, when the news was buzzing all over the circus lot that he had completely recovered. They were saying that he had been miraculously brought back from the dead, that I had done it, and that I was a great man of faith.

I went back to my motel room, quite disturbed about this event. I flipped through the pages of the Gideon Bible—which I very rarely did—and of all things, my fingers landed on James 5:15: “And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.” I read the passage over and over. The next one I came upon was Matthew 18:20: “For where two or three are

gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." I thought, "There were certainly more than two or three in that tent. Maybe everyone else had the faith, and I was the only one there who didn't have it."

One thing Bobby Yerkes had said that made a deep impression on me was that God was going to reach me, even if he had to perform a miracle to do it. Bobby kept drumming it into my head that Jesus had a purpose for me, and that the devil was fighting it. A miracle would somehow play a part in that struggle. I was awfully confused, but soon I became convinced that God had indeed performed a miracle. I thought that in guiding me to those two scripture passages, God had showed me his word, and it "proved" to me that the "healing" in the tent had been a miracle planned so that I could see the power of God. *This* was how God was going to reach me.

I started reading the Bible, and the more I read, the more I wanted to read. I started associating with Christians and listening to preachers on the radio.

When I told Bobby Yerkes about all this, he invited me to another Christian businessmen's meeting, in Los Angeles. As they prayed at that meeting, I felt the same tingling that I had felt in my mind and body in the circus tent in Memphis, when I had "prayed" the man back to life. I told Bobby that I was now ready, and he led me through the "Sinner's Prayer." With that, I became a born-again Christian.

Word got out very quickly. I guess I had represented a challenge to the Christians because of my colorful lifestyle. Bit by bit, other circus people became born-again as a result.

It wasn't long before members of the Assemblies of God contacted me. They are always on the prowl for public figures to endorse their denomination.

When the circus was in New Orleans, I went on a Christian talk show and told about my experience in the circus tent. Although I did not say that the man had risen from the dead, that was how the pastors understood my story and retold it. When I was doing the show I met an evangelist named Coleman McDuff. He was quite well known in the gospel-singing field as one of the McDuff Brothers, and he was very involved in the Assemblies of God. He loved to be around celebrities. He loved to talk about his association with Connie Smith of the Grand Ole Opry, and about how he had been the one responsible for the conversion of Colonel Sanders of fried-chicken fame—a story that's quite regrettable in some ways.

He spoke to me of how God had arranged our meeting, and invited me to give my testimony at a revival that he was having that Sunday morning at the nearby Westwego Assemblies of God church. That led me to the Reverend Paul Radke, who was the first of a number of Assemblies of God insiders who encouraged me to enter the ministry. He gave me some books to study. I gave him quite a large donation for his local television ministry, after he told me what a hard time he was having reaching lost, sinful souls and keeping the devil from taking over New Orleans.

The warmth of the reception I received the first few times I preached in those churches was so positive, I had never felt anything quite like it. The outpouring of encouragement from those people was incredible. I was being set up as the model Christian for others to emulate. Naturally, one gives one's money generously after getting such a build-up. Coleman started talking me up to people, and flying me to various places around the country to do revival meetings with him. He contacted the Assemblies of God national headquarters, and the people there decided to do a booklet on me, on the Christian conversion of a ringmaster. They all smothered me with attention. The booklet was distributed, and that really started things rolling.

By this time I was "Brother" Miles, speaking in Assemblies of God churches almost every week, between engagements with the circus. Usually I'd speak at a Sunday morning service, do my matinee with the circus, and then speak in another church at the Sunday evening service. Often, a church would set a mid-week service to suit my schedule.

Eventually I desired to become an ordained minister. I did some studying on my own, and read avidly, up to my ordination. A condition of my ordination was my promising to take part in the Bearean School of the Bible correspondence program, which I did. I had to pass some oral and written examinations, and I found them pretty stiff.

Usually in the Assemblies, a prospective pastor is licensed, and then there is a two-year waiting period before he is ordained. But they licensed and ordained me at the same time. Even what they regarded as my official baptism did not take place until after my ordination. There was no training in related subjects—counseling, for example—that a minister ought to have. These ministers disparagingly refer to seminaries as "cemeteries," since they teach things that are "of the world" and not really biblical. Worldly wisdom is foolishness in the eyes of God, as far as they are concerned; the



Cover of an Assemblies of God "miniature booklet."

holy spirit, not the learned professors, is to be one's teacher. What matters most is that one is "anointed" to preach by the Holy Spirit. These people are really against knowledge, and had me convinced that I should be that way too. Even today, Assemblies' pastors are very undertrained for handling lives, in my opinion.

Eventually, as a result of my association with these "holy" people, my personal life was totally devastated. You wind up going to extremes; once they get you in their clutches, and you are surrounded by them, it doesn't take long. They suggest that you get away from "people of the world" and surround yourself only with "spiritual" Christians. That is the only way that you will be "strong in God," and that he can work through you. You begin to look at your own people—your family and friends outside of the fold—with suspicion. It begins to seem perfectly normal to participate in things that you would have found fanatical and nutty before.

You start to view your spouse with suspicion. My wife was a lovely, cultured Swiss heiress who—for good reason—was repelled by the behavior of the church people and objected to the huge cash donations I was making. She was against missionaries in general because she knew that they had destroyed entire cultures, and she knew what dark times the Inquisition and the Reformation had brought. The more I got involved in praying for her "salvation," the more fault I found with her and the more distant we became. Little by little, a couple in that situation drifts apart, and the church people encourage that all the way. The church is all well and good for the family, only as long as all of the

family members agree with the church and its pastor. But if one member vocally disagrees, the church will do everything it can to separate that troublesome one from the family. The divorce rate is heartbreakingly high in the born-again church. The church people drove my wife away—and to my immense sorrow, I let them.

My daughter, too, was much better off before I brought her into it. She was a bright, beautiful girl who showed so much promise as a concert pianist that she won medals and competitions, and was accepted by the New York High School for the Performing Arts. She would occasionally play in the churches where I preached. Once, when she was fourteen years old, a host pastor blew up when he found out that she had planned to play a composition by Bach. He would have none of that “worldly music” in his church. She was similarly rebuffed by other church people. She didn’t have a flair for the kind of music the Pentecostals wanted, and finally quit playing altogether. My daughter had high standards, which the fundamentalists pulled down. Today she is a housewife in New Jersey, surrounded by church people and completely estranged from me. I have a grandson whom I have never seen.

The circus is the most unfairly maligned profession in the world. Those awful movies, where circus people are portrayed

as mad or criminal, and the old association with the carnival, which is a different kind of institution altogether—contribute to its bad image. Before the Christians got into the circus, divorce and adultery were virtually unheard of. Circus people could never keep on performing their dangerous, precision acts without mishap in an atmosphere of family turmoil. I never saw stealing, cheating, alcoholism, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, or any of that kind of thing in the circus. Family members worked together, traveled together, played together, and genuinely liked one another. Children could read a road map before they could read a textbook, and all the adults had a part in their education. For the rearing of children, the circus served as a wonderful extended family; you could feel the vitality of family life in that atmosphere.

When the Christians began making inroads into the circus, mainstream society made inroads into it too. The sexual morality loosened up, and drugs and alcohol came in. The circus people who have been born-again are no better off in those respects than those who have not—and they may even be worse. Dividing lines have been drawn up in the circus between born-again and non-born-again—sometimes within the same family. The camaraderie that used to be backstage at the circus is no more.

I often hear fundamentalists boasting that they are great defenders of family values. But they leave out the most important thing. When they proclaim that they are the ones who are going to protect the family and that the world is falling apart because people don’t live Christian family lives, it’s a big lie. The only “family” they are interested in is the family of God. When someone in the natural family won’t go along with their born-again notions, he or she is basically shunned, though Christians won’t admit to that. I don’t think any influence has broken up more families than religion has.

Of course, this is all in retrospect. At the time, I was flying high on the “Word of the Lord.” I once had a speaking engagement in an Assemblies’ church in Charlotte, North Carolina. The minister there told me about a Christian television show that had recently gone on the air. He particularly liked it, and also thought it could help me to publicize the Royal Lipizzan Stallion show, with which I was touring at the time. When I asked him what show it was, he said, “Praise the Lord!” It took me a moment to realize that that was the name of the show, not a worshipful exclamation the pastor was blurting out. He

told me about Jim Bakker, the young Assemblies’ minister who hosted it, noting that Bakker really knew the Lord.

I became a guest on the show in the early days, back when Jim and Tammy were broadcasting from a converted furniture store on Independence Boulevard. It was an elegant little studio—for such a small space, the finest I have ever seen. They had six stations carrying the program the first time I went on. The program flowed well. It was comfortable, and had a wonderful sweetness about it in those early days.

Back then, Tammy did not wear make-up. She told me how God had healed her of epilepsy when she was a little girl, and how grateful she was for that. They had their little girl, Tammy Sue, with them, and I was there when she first saw a Tammy Sue doll, one of the first PTL merchandising items. The show was really interesting and different, and many people watched it—not just born-again Christians. To me, these were two very “anointed” young people, and I predicted then that they would go right to the top.

I began to notice something wrong about Jim Bakker and the “PTL Club” as it was getting ready to move to its second location, Heritage Village on Park Road in Charlotte. The money came pouring in; Jim didn’t really have to push for it. The staff was taking buckets of mail home to count the money inside the envelopes. Stations were being added constantly. Jim’s wardrobe became more elegant, and show-business slickness crept in more and more. Jim now had a chauffeured limousine, and we rode to the new site in it, to see the new studio complex under construction.

Instead of the pride and joy I was expecting, Jim, with a pensive face, told me that he had received a bomb threat and obscene phone calls. He was really shaken, because it was Christians who were doing this to him. He had expected them to love him, and was completely bewildered that some of them hated him instead. In the past Jim had usually retreated from confrontations. I could see the conflict in him, his indecision about whether to retreat or go on the offensive. I could see him stiffen up; it was almost as if he grew a couple of inches before my eyes. Jim Bakker came of age that day. He would do what he had to do, and from that time on, Christians would have to pay him tribute.

After that, PTL changed. It never regained the purity it had before. Jim had to toughen up. He swung to the opposite extreme, and got so tough that he had no regard for anyone else. Nobody could even



Austin Miles today.

approach him. He became a regular little Napoleon. His focus was mainly on the money. There was absolutely no need for the orgy of building he embarked on at Heritage Village and Heritage U.S.A., and in the end PTL could not support it. If he had just continued as he was he would have done just fine. The more money that came in, the more he spent on high living—while some of his employees were so underpaid that they were on food stamps. The “PTL Club” became coldly professional show business, and my own recognition factor soared because I took part in it.

I saw the shady financial dealings. I saw what the leaders really thought of the ordinary worshipers. I began to see the leaders of the Assemblies as greedy, corrupt, and power-hungry.

But I kept ignoring the warning signs, until I ran into one that I just couldn't ignore. One day I walked into the steam room at Heritage Village and caught Jim Bakker in a homosexual encounter with three young men. My eyes were opened, as it were, and I began to see more things: John Wesley Fletcher's questionable actions, the gospel groupies, and another dangerous liaison taking place around every corner. At that point I had fallen out of favor with the Assemblies hierarchy, and was under fire. Jim defended me, and I kept appearing as a guest on his show even though the Assemblies of God hierarchy was closing as many churches to me as it could. I was grateful for that, and it gave me a big incentive to look the other way and to rationalize away all the immorality I ran into at PTL.

Still, I kept clinging to the idea that God wanted me in the ministry, and that all of my bad experiences were some sort of Job-like test. I became more and more depressed and listless, and my “testimony” about the joy and sense of fulfillment that Christianity brought me became more and more hollow. Somehow, I kept myself sufficiently together to make a series of television programs, named after my signature slogan, “You Are Special!” My show-business skill enabled me to hide the fact that I was crumbling inside. For the only time in my life, I began to rely on Valium and other prescription drugs. I had given the church practically all of my money. I had driven my wife away; the church people had convinced me that she was of the devil because she wouldn't become one of us. I had wanted to resign from my ministry, but the church leaders counseled me to wait. Then they launched a letter-writing campaign against me, and railroaded me out

of the ministry.

By the holiday season of 1982, so many negative, absurd experiences had accumulated that I had made preparations to commit suicide. During that dark period, I went to Manhattan and got a temporary job in Macy's Christmas display, as an elf and later as Santa Claus. That experience proved to be therapeutic, and put me on the road to restoring my sense of proportion, my priorities.

Then, one day I was getting ready to go to a service in Cape May, New Jersey, part of a “charismatic conference” at a mainline Presbyterian church. I still had a few church dates—just enough to keep body and soul together. I got a call from a circus producer I had worked with years before, who needed a ringmaster to work as a replacement on short notice. He wanted me for some dates in the Ontario area. It made me finally realize that I wanted to get out of the Christianity scene altogether, and this was my golden opportunity to do so. For the only time in my career as a minister, I cancelled the church date on short notice, and went and did the circus date instead. It involved three shows a day under canvas. The public and the media opened up to me. Despite a campaign by a national Christian women's group to disrupt some of those performances and give me bad publicity, my comeback was a success.

In other areas of life, there is no way I ever would have associated with the sleazy assortment of characters I ran into in the church world. A lot of very shady men seem to end up as preachers. It seems that people with experience in one kind of con or another make some of the best preachers. The widespread homosexuality I found among the ministers was a big puzzle to me. Too much of that was a lie. When I think that I gave up my family to get tangled up with those people, I am appalled.

Getting sucked into born-again Christianity is something that can happen to intelligent people. We all have our vulnerable spots. Mine was being the product of a broken marriage, in a time and place where respectable people looked down their noses at divorce. For my mother, having a little boy in tow and no husband was a terrible embarrassment. She sought approval from the Presbyterians, but never really achieved it. I grew up feeling unwanted, like I was just in my mother's way—and I carried that memory into adult life. Inwardly, I still felt like a nobody, even though outwardly I had developed a complete and rewarding life. Having lived so much of my life in a realm apart from mainstream society helped to set

the stage. Having special skills that the Christians wanted made their evangelization of me particularly aggressive. When the church people inundated me with approval and acceptance, it really struck a responsive chord and gave me a kind of status I had never had before. It seemed like the ultimate acceptance. Other people have other vulnerable spots. For many, it's embarrassing things in their past, and the desire to be a different person from the one in whose life the bad things happened. Such things can be powerful motivators.

Today I am totally free of religion. The quality that distinguishes my life now from my life as a born-again is freedom. I don't wish to upset those who remain attached to religion and who have seen little of its dark side, so I like to say that I am on a spiritual R and R. Even when I left the church and got back into show business, I experienced something like withdrawal symptoms. An important moment of truth came when I had a confrontation with a churchman, and I blurted out that the Assemblies of God is a cult—the first time I had ever called it that. At that moment, the final emotional tie was cut.

Before that, there were still times when I wanted to pick up a Bible. It really is a sort of drug, and the born-again church leaders are like drug lords, enslaving people with bonds of guilt and fear of punishment in the hereafter. Those people pay the leaders for a commodity they never needed in the first place. To get your fix of the commodity, you do what you are told to do. If they raise the price, you pay it. It is not a physical dependence, like drugs can cause, but it is a form of dependence nonetheless. Why else would anyone still support Jimmy Swaggart?

My experience with the born-again community left me with a lot of pent-up anger; I have found the Bible's advice on handling anger about as useful as Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart found its advice on handling sexual temptation. I wrote *Don't Call Me Brother* to distance myself, to see the whole experience in perspective. It has been great therapy for my anger, which is now gone.

I would encourage others with similar stories to realize that it is not the devil, not the unbelievers, and not the secular humanists who have hurt them, but their own churches that are the cause of the anger they are repressing. Living my story was an experience I would not wish on anyone. I wish I hadn't gone through it. Nothing could ever make up for the misery I experienced and caused others—particularly my former wife—while under the influence. ●

Humanism in the Black Community

Norm Allen

Very little has been said about how secular humanism pertains to nonwhite people. Few nonwhites profess to be secular humanists. Many would argue that nonwhites have not been given a proper introduction to secular humanism and therefore obviously could not be attracted to it. But I contend that nonwhites in general and blacks in particular do not pursue secular humanism largely because it is rooted in purely Eurocentric thinking, which has consistently ignored and degraded nonwhites. Secular humanist authors write with an air of Western intellectual superiority. They often write about "Western" art, music, science, religion, and architecture as though white Westerners are nature's gift to humanity. They write history as though whites were the world's only true achievers. They write of the great accomplishments of man, but it appears that they really mean the white man.

One of the greatest frauds ever perpetrated by the white intellectual community has been the systematic "whitening" of the ancient Egyptian civilization. Egyptians regarded themselves as black Africans. They referred to their land as Kmt (or Kemit), "the black land," and they referred to themselves as black people. Herodotus described them as a black, woolly-haired people; and Aristotle described them as "very black." And the way they portrayed themselves artistically proves their African ancestry. Representations of Menes, Imhotep, Queen Hatshepsut, Amenophis III, Queen Tiye, Akenaton, King Tut, and other great Egyptian leaders depict individuals who were clearly blacks.

This brief reference to ancient Egypt is essential to our discussion of secular humanism because humanist authors assert that science, philosophy, and "true knowledge" began in Greece. But even in the Greek traditions, Africa is referred to as the oldest seat of learning, "the land where the gods used to dwell." The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* trace the origins

of Greek civilization back to Africa.

Secular humanism draws from some of Western history's greatest thinkers, many of whom were directly or indirectly influenced by blacks. For example, the black anthropologist J. A. Rogers writes, "The influence of Aesop on Western thought and morals is profound. Plato, Socrates, Aristophanes, Aristotle, Solon, Cicero, Julius Caesar, Caxton, Shakespeare, La Fontaine, and the other great thinkers found inspiration in his words of wisdom. Socrates spent his last days putting his fables into verse." And, contrary to popular opinion, Aesop was a black African slave whose name in Greek means "Ethiopian."

Christians have their white angels, Christs, Madonnas, and patron saints, which perpetuate the myth of white superiority. And for the most part, secular humanists have white heroes and role models as well.

However, many white scholars have acknowledged the theft and destruction of history by both competent and incompetent historians. As Napoleon Bonaparte related, "History is a set of lies agreed upon."

As enlightened and open-minded as secular humanists profess to be, they evidently have yet to free themselves from the confines of one-sided Eurocentric thinking. They are brilliant at exposing fraud whenever a paranormal claim is made, but despite their vast knowledge of history, religion, philosophy, and related subjects, they still give white Westerners credit for nearly every great contribution made to humanity. Their reason seems to fade when they are studying nonwhite or non-European civilizations. And even when they are studying Western civilizations they often ignore the roles that nonwhites have played in developing those cultures.

Many people seem to believe that intelligence is inextricably bound to open-mindedness and commitment to truth. But many people simply use their intelligence to support their blindly held convictions. The American historian and statesman George Bancroft once said, "The prejudices of ignorance are more easily removed than the prejudices of interest; the first are blindly adopted, the second willfully preferred." A man may have a great memory but it does not necessarily follow that he is also a great thinker. Learning is important, but perhaps it is even more important to think about what we learn. And much of what we learn we must unlearn or relearn.

The anthropologist Ashley Montagu has been a great proponent of the idea that there is only one race: "I am convinced that when the intellectual history of our times comes to be written, the idea of race, both the popular and the taxonomic,

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will be viewed for what it is; a confused and dangerous idea which happened to fit the social requirements of a thoroughly exploitative period in the development of Western man."

People have been trying to classify human beings by race for three hundred years. Various scholars have suggested that there are as few as two and as many as two thousand different races. Peoples who are obviously black, such as the Ethiopians and Senegalese, have at times been assigned to the white race. Scholars have spoken of a Malay race, an Irish race, a Filipino race, even an American race. Many people speak of a Jewish race without realizing that Judaism is actually a religion practiced by peoples of different physical types throughout the world. There are those who speak of Aryan, Hamitic, and Semitic races, oblivious to the fact that they are speaking of languages, not races. Arthur Schopenhauer even regarded women as a race!

Scholars who classify human beings by race often are not sure of where one race ends and another begins. And how a group of individuals is to be classified is often the result of political necessity or advantage. Albert Einstein was well aware of this: "If my theory of relativity is proven successful, Germany will claim me as a German . . . should my theory prove untrue . . . Germany will declare that I am a Jew."

But there is no need to classify people by race. Dogs and horses are classified by breeds, but this is done by human beings who are interested in using them for specific purposes. The animals themselves obviously show no interest in maintaining the "purity" of their breeds. Race helps to identify people, but this can be done without making a fetish out of the accidental physical differences that exist among them.

It is highly unlikely that a pure race exists anywhere in the world. The various peoples of the earth have intermixed for countless millennia. We humans beings are more alike than we are different. A belief in the bogus concept of race is far more trouble than it is worth. Properly speaking, there is only one race—the human race, and we should not feel obligated to accept any other.

A 1980 Gallup Poll rated American blacks highest in religiosity among the peoples of twenty-three countries; a 1986 Gallup Poll revealed blacks to be the most religious people in America. Five surveys were conducted that showed 74 percent of black Americans to be very religious, while only 55 percent of all Americans were considered as such. The evangelist Billy Graham has publicly stated that black Americans are the best Christians in the United States, and many others share this belief.

The black syndicated columnist and television commentator Tony Brown once remarked, "If not for the black church, black America wouldn't have had a prayer." But he also could have added that if not for European Christianity and the evils of slavery and racism that it fostered, there would have been no need for the black church. Christianity has caused more problems for blacks than it has solved.

Christianity as taught to blacks by Westerners was a tool of racist oppression. In 1455, prior to Columbus's European "discovery" of the New World, the Roman Catholic pope issued a bull that gave Portugal the moral right to enslave

all "infidel" peoples in foreign lands. In 1457 the Council of Cardinals met in Holland and agreed that it was their moral duty to enslave Africans and convert them to Christianity. The pope agreed and Christians throughout the world, including Protestants, gradually accepted the idea. In the fifteenth century the papacy dominated the minds of most Westerners where morality was concerned. Eventually, most of the nonwhite world was conquered by men who used Christianity as their moral stamp of approval.

After Christianity was forced upon blacks, they began to formulate their own ideas about God and religious faith. A system of beliefs evolved around the story of Moses leading the Israelites to the Promised Land. Many blacks believed that one day God would directly or indirectly lead them to the "promised land" of freedom.

Although blacks came to adapt many of their own religious ideas to Christianity, they were still largely brainwashed by the racist beliefs forced upon them by a hostile white society. The positive religious images that black people had been exposed to (the angels, the prophets, Christ, Mary, and so on) were white. The negative images (Satan and his angels) were black. They learned that Ham, the son of Noah, was cursed by God. He was turned black and his descendants were doomed to serve the white race.

Despite the many negative aspects of Christianity, it helped blacks to survive slavery; many people are impressed by the overwhelming strength of black spirituality despite the horrors of slavery. But there is no reason to be impressed. Blacks had tremendous faith in God, not *despite* slavery but *because of it!* Throughout history poor people have tended to be deeply religious; their beliefs have often made them apathetic to their plight and easy for the rich to dominate. This was the case with blacks during slavery.

Christianity was not taught to blacks for their benefit; it was taught to them for the benefit of their masters. It was not taught to help them succeed, but to assure their survival as productive slave laborers.

Attempts have been made by various black religious leaders and organizations to espouse Afrocentric religions. But these religions have never really appealed to the black masses. Blacks have been subjected to Eurocentric religious ideas and images for so long that most attempts to teach them the true African origins of their faith have been in vain.

Some blacks have embraced Islam as an acceptable alternative to Christianity. Others have accepted their own brand of the Hebrew faith or various other religions, though most blacks still prefer the essentially Eurocentric Christian faith. And the fact remains that *all* religions suppress thought.

Blacks are very proud of their deep religious convictions, but convictions are usually obstacles to new and productive ideas. The ultimate value of a religion is not how long it has helped a people to survive, but how far it has helped them to advance. Although blacks are the most religious Americans, they are among the least prosperous. This is probably because too much emphasis has been placed on spirituality and not enough on rational thought in dealing with the problems that confront black people.

Many black Americans are still looking for another Martin

Luther King Jr. or a Moses to lead them to freedom, justice, and equality. They point to “prophecies” that demonstrate how God will lead them to freedom one of these days.

Most black leaders throughout American history have maintained that religion or spirituality should be the basis around which to build any black movement. Malcolm X correctly pointed out that blacks did not suffer religious persecution, but racial persecution, and maintained that religious beliefs are irrelevant to the struggle for black progress. Though he was a theist, he realized that because Eurocentric Christianity was largely the cause of the racial problem, it could not be the solution.

Christianity has helped to bring about much positive change for blacks, but it has failed to advance them to their much beloved “promised land”—for the bottom line is not positive change, but real progress.

It is highly unlikely that most people will abandon religious faith altogether, at least in the near future, but with logical persuasion they may be willing to subordinate their religious beliefs to rational thought much more often.

Several moral dilemmas can arise as a result of repeated attacks on religion. For example, although religious texts are full of the inconsistencies, contradictions, absurdities, inaccuracies, and blatant lies that promote immoral behavior, a lot of theists have managed to reject many of the immoral aspects of their faiths and lead exemplary moral lives. Many of these kind, modest, generous, tolerant human beings will obviously be hurt by a devastating rational critique of their religious beliefs. And many of these individuals would lose faith in life, humanity, and themselves if they lost faith in their God. It is unfortunate that religions do not acknowledge the existence of moral dilemmas—absolute morality is the nonsense religions are made of.

But moral dilemmas will not disappear simply because we refuse to acknowledge them. The humane rationalist does not create these dilemmas, but feels morally obligated to face and correct them. If we are willing to identify a problem we must not be afraid to identify the cause of the problem, which could be even more controversial than the problem itself.

There is no easy way to reveal a brutal truth. It is a popular misconception that the truth is always beautiful and desirable. If we are honest with ourselves we know this is simply not the case. People do not necessarily accept what they *believe* to be true; they often accept what they *want* to be true. The truth can be beautiful, but lies can be even more beautiful to those who fear the truth. Simply put, it is often better to tell a lie to protect someone’s feelings or even one’s life than to tell a truth that could cause that person great emotional pain or worse. If some truths were known by the wrong kinds of people the only possible consequences would be destructive.

When we are faced with moral dilemmas someone inevitably gets hurt. This is why we must learn to value truth not for its own sake, but for its usefulness in *humanely* advancing happiness, whenever this is possible.

It is for this reason that secular humanism has so much potential for improving the human race. Civilizations have advanced by abandoning bad traditions and maintaining good

ones, but many nations have advanced *despite* bad traditions. It is in our best interest to make human advancement as easy and painless as possible. To fear new ideas is to fear progress.

Secular humanism is vastly superior to religion because it allows us to think seriously about our problems rather than blindly put our faith in mythological beings who have often failed us miserably. Rational thought is not infallible, but it is the best guide we have for succeeding in life. If it is not restrained by humane ideals, however, it can be just as destructive as religion, if not more so.

Jean Toomer wrote: “We have many reformers, few transformers.” This applies to life in general and to the struggle for black liberation in particular. Movements with strong religious themes have brought about many reforms for blacks, but there has been no major transformation in the overall status of blacks anywhere in the world during modern times. Religion is a well-dressed foolish idea that unfortunately will continue to have much influence over the lives of many people.

No one is as open-minded as he or she believes. Even the wisest and most logical among us are often more superstitious than we know or will admit. We all have some irrational beliefs. Therefore, it should not be surprising that using reason against religion will often prove futile.

Though many confused theists will inevitably come face to face with uncomfortable truths that disprove their religious beliefs, this need not be a terrifying experience for those who have learned to think pragmatically.

People are attracted to movements that reflect their values, culture, and history. There are those who believe that if non-whites want to join the humanist movement they must voluntarily come forth and submit their views. But generally, non-whites must feel as though they are wanted before they will come forth. Humanists must demonstrate their commitment to and respect for the contributions of all peoples by attempting to attract profound nonwhite thinkers, just as their religious counterparts have done throughout history. The police, business, the armed forces, institutions of higher learning, and various political parties often direct their messages specifically toward minority groups. Even the Republicans, most of whom have been regarded as racists by black Americans, have done more to recruit blacks to their ranks than have the humanists. For example, conservative magazines throughout the United States have featured articles by black conservatives; how many black humanists write for humanist publications or publishing companies? If humanists tried hard to recruit nonwhite thinkers, they would greatly increase the size and influence of the humanist movement.

Humanism has great potential. Unlike the Catholic church, dissent is not only allowed within the humanist philosophy, it is encouraged. But I cannot in good conscience encourage black people to join any movement that continually denies their contributions to the world. Unless humanists are willing to acknowledge the worth of all peoples, humanism will not—and should not—grow into a popular philosophy.

If secular humanists—and their religious counterparts—have the courage to examine history in a rational and unbiased manner, secular humanism will attract more rational people of color. ●

In the Spring 1988 issue of FREE INQUIRY, Robert O. Clarke, professor of religious studies at Oregon State University, claimed that Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, a "flamboyant and controversial Indian guru," is suffering from narcissistic personality disorder. The following articles by Robert H. Rimmer and the Bhagwan himself challenge that charge, and Robert Basil writes in response.

The Enlightened Humanist: Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

Robert H. Rimmer

Last December I suggested that Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh be elected to the Academy of Humanism, and that Prometheus Books consider publishing the Bhagwan's manifesto: *The Greatest Challenge*, a 100-page, somewhat utopian guide to creating a better world in the twenty-first century. Or perhaps the little book could be condensed and reprinted in *FREE INQUIRY*.

When I made this proposal to the editors of *FREE INQUIRY*, the reaction was that I must have missed the essay that appeared in the Spring 1988 issue. In this essay, called "The Narcissistic Guru," Ronald O. Clarke, professor of religious studies at Oregon State University, labeled the Bhagwan as "the product of a delusional system associated with a narcissistic personality disorder." This is defined by the American Psychiatric Association as:

a grandiose sense of self-importance or uniqueness; preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success; exhibitionistic need for constant attention and admiration; characteristic responses to threats of self-esteem; and characteristic disturbances in interpersonal relationships, such as feelings of entitlement, interpersonal exploitiveness, relations that alternate between extremes of overidealization and devaluation, and lack of empathy.

Clarke claims that Rajneesh, like Jim Bakker, Maheshi Mahesh Yogi, Jimmy Swaggart, and others, offers "a graphic example of how the role of spiritual guru can provide both a refuge and a vehicle for certain narcissists who combine mystical proclivities with cleverness, imagination, boldness, and a flair for showmanship." Clarke proceeds to expose Rajneesh and categorize him as one more of the religious charlatans whom humanists delight in denouncing. I sent Clarke's article to Laura Sarkin, a friend and follower of Rajneesh who lives in Sausalito. I knew that she would send it on to headquarters in Poona, India. Then, to my surprise, I received from Roshani, a Rajneesh sannyasin living in Salem, Oregon, a copy of a thirty-page report to the Oregon Committee for the Humanities. "The Teachings of Bhagwan

Rajneesh and their Social, Ethical, and Environmental Implications" analyzes Rajneesh's writings in great detail. It was written by Ronald O. Clarke in 1983.

Unlike his later diatribe, Clarke's first essay is a thoughtful introduction to the Bhagwan's philosophy that praises most of his thinking. Clarke's original essay proves my contention that Rajneesh's philosophy is closely allied to Western humanistic beliefs.

Clarke begins his first essay with a discussion of Rajneesh's metaphysical orientation, and he points out that from the Bhagwan's point of view, "reality is non-teleological. God is not a person, not a creator. Reality has no ultimate meaning or purpose." Score one for the Bhagwan as a humanist. The Humanist Manifesto II states: "We can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. . . . No deity will save us. We must save ourselves." Rajneesh concurs unconditionally. The only difference between him and the typical humanist is that Rajneesh knows *how* we can save ourselves.

Clarke next tackles the Bhagwan's self-image, pointing out that in the East, Bhagwan means "blessed one." Reaching this buddhalike state is possible for anyone who learns how through meditation; the mind is dissolved, and you discover that you are "at one with the universe."

Is this mystical point of view acceptable to humanists? Looking over the roster of the Academy of Humanism, I would guess that many members would accept that it is possible to achieve, at least occasionally, an "enlightened" feeling of cosmic awareness that we and the universe are one. This coincides with the Gaia theory, modern particle physics, and the theory of the universe as hologrammic, all of which spring from scientific thinking.

Next Clarke explores Rajneesh's vision of "the new man" and discovers that "the new man will be both materialistic and spiritual. . . . This-worldly, concerned with this life. . . . He will be life-affirming and will live out of love, not fear." Rajneesh offers "love and meditation" as the alternate pathways to self-fulfillment. In terms that evoke Abraham Maslow and Lawrence Kohlberg, Clarke points out that for the Bhagwan love moves from lower forms (self love, unconditional love) to "a love that is a state of being, not

Robert Rimmer is the author of thirty-five books, including The Harrad Experiment.

a relationship." As the new man/woman matures, he/she learns to live on two levels and uses meditation as the pathway to transcendence. Rajneesh points out in his latest book, *Zarathustra: A God that Can Dance*, that his new man and Nietzsche's superman are one and the same. He mentions furthermore that Nietzsche would have been appalled, as we are, at the Hitlerian meaning of the word.

Explaining transcendence, Clarke paraphrases the Bhagwan, explaining that meditation is "to cultivate and experience our 'inner witness'; an inner part of our psychic being that is totally detached from our phenomenal experience, thoughts, feelings, desires, sensations, etc." This may sound like mysticism to secular humanists, and the Bhagwan's approach to dissolve the mind and ego and take respite from the illusions of the world may be a path to "enlightenment" that can be achieved by only a few, but in another sense it is the key to all human creativity. "Live the world with mind," Rajneesh tells you, "But live with yourself without mind." That's not religion. It's a philosophical, humanistic lifestyle.

The remarkable thing about Clarke's 1983 accolade to Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh are its parallels with the Humanist Manifesto II. Exploring Rajneesh's morality and ethics, Clarke writes: "Rajneesh's approach is radically 'situationist.' . . . The truly moral man is one who is fully aware and responds spontaneously to each emerging life situation." Rajneesh is scathingly critical of all traditional forms of absolutistic morality, which he believes are created by society to enslave people; he stresses the development of character or conscience. Humanists may not agree completely but compare this thought with one expressed in Humanist Manifesto II: "We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics are autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction."

Clarke points out that when it comes to the individual and society, Rajneesh regards his thinking as nonpolitical. But the Bhagwan is not a victim of Emerson's "foolish inconsistencies." He can change his mind, and in his manifesto *The Greatest Challenge* he calls for activism that will contribute to a better world. As expressed in the Humanist Manifesto II, we must seek "fully international cooperation in culture, science, and arts and technology, across international borders."

Likewise, in Clarke's early analysis of the Bhagwan's philosophy and teachings there is a fundamental agreement with humanists on freedom and democracy. "Communism can only exist in a climate of dictatorship," Rajneesh writes. "Communism cannot be democratic, socialism can never be democratic. Capitalism is a democratic way of life."

Rajneesh is also in total agreement with the section of the Humanist Manifesto II that states that the right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized and that the many varieties of sexual expression should not be considered evil in and of themselves. Going a step further than the humanists, Rajneesh extols Tantric-fashion sex-energy, which, as Clarke points out, is "a way of discovering and recognizing 'timelessness and egolessness.'" The Bhagwan believes that the dissolution of the mind that occurs momentarily during sexual orgasm can be replicated in the

process of meditation and maintained over a longer period of time—until, in fact, it becomes one level of a lifestyle.

As for marriage and the family, Rajneesh says, "Marriage is the most fundamental institution. Out of it everything grows." But again, as Clarke notes, for the Bhagwan "Marriage is not essentially a legal institution. It leads to possessiveness, bondage, and lack of real commitment and responsibility." Again, Clarke's analysis of Rajneesh's thinking on sex, marriage, and drugs is in total accord with the Humanist Manifesto II.

Clarke also covers Rajneesh's philosophy of education, religion, violence, and the status and role of women. He writes that Rajneesh believes that nationalism "has become obsolete," and that, regarding evolution and the environment, "Man is not an island: man exists in an infinite web of millions of forms of life and existence." Rajneesh unequivocally supports birth control and population control, but at the same time he believes that "technologically, we are able to live in a very affluent world. There are no boundaries to human capacities. . . . The greatest challenge before technology is how to maintain ecological harmony."

Clarke concludes his 1983 portrayal of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh by asking whether "Rajneeshism is a cult, not a religion." His evaluation is that it should be regarded "as an emerging new religion" and that we should evaluate its distinctive merits. Clarke thoroughly dissipates the fear that "Rajneesh regards himself as God"; he is simply a person "who has fully awakened to his divine status," a potential that Rajneesh feels is available to all human beings.

Clarke also rejects the belief that Rajneesh's followers are "brainwashed" and that Rajneeshpuram, located in Antelope, Oregon, was a haven for drugs and free sex. "It is my surmise," Clarke writes, "that Rajneeshpuram may be one of the most drug-free communities in the United States."

Finally Clarke asks the question that five years later formed the basis for his diatribe against Rajneesh: "Is Rajneeshism narcissistic?" Clarke responds that all *adavita* mystics are preoccupied with obtaining individual awareness and self-realization as the highest priority of life, and that true amelioration of the world's ills can occur only after its inhabitants have obtained a sufficiently advanced level of awareness. He concludes, "We may have justifiable reasons for disagreeing with his approach—I for one am not in complete accord with it—but I do not believe it is accurate or fair to label his ultimate mission as narcissistic." (Emphasis added.)

In 1983 Ronald O. Clarke was practically a Rajneesh sannyasin. Five years later, after Rajneesh was deported from the United States (presumably on immigration fraud charges), Clarke, without mentioning his former writings, excoriates the Bhagwan's bizarre behavior and tries to prove that he suffers from a mental disorder. If, as Clarke stated earlier, Rajneeshism is an emerging religion, Clarke may be nominated as a latter-day Judas. Given the larger framework of Rajneesh's beliefs and the limited circulation of *FREE INQUIRY*, Clarke's put-down doesn't amount to much. On the other hand, from a humanist point of view it irks me that *FREE INQUIRY* tries to convince its readers that Rajneeshism is just another one

of those “irrational cults and theologies of withdrawal and retreat” that are condemned in the Humanist Manifesto II.

Leaving aside the publicity that Rajneesh achieved in Oregon, his innumerable Rolls Royces (a tongue-in-cheek comment on consumerism?) and his betrayal by his personal secretary Ma Arand Sheela, I think that Rajneesh’s conception of the education of the new man and woman could be embraced by humanists in the United States and Europe.

But first let me briefly explain how and why my own thinking during the past forty years has coincided with the Bhagwan’s philosophy of life. During World War II, when Shree Rajneesh was twelve years old, I was in India. I had read Swami Vivekanda’s treatises on Vedanta, and soon discovered the writings of Sir John Woodroffe, also known as Arthur Avalon, who had written extensively about yoga, including Tantric practices, in his books *Serpent Power* and *Sakti and Sakta*, to name only two.

At the turn of the century, the British were well aware of the sexual elements in Tantric practice, but these were considered obscene and little had appeared in print. Works about a religion that offered a path to the divine essence of the world through extended sexual intercourse were not easy to obtain, but in 1918 Woodroffe came to grips with the Tantric doctrines of maithuna, when sexual union “takes on the grandeur of a great rite.”

Fifteen years later I wrote my first novel, *The Rebellion of Yale Marratt*. I was one of the first novelists to offer Tantric sex and extended sexual intercourse as a joyous way for a man and woman to discover each other as they abandon their egos and at the same delicious moment achieve a kind of cosmic awareness. During the Hindu wedding ceremony in which Yale Marratt marries Anne Wilson (both are Americans) I have an Indian guru, Sri Sundari, explain the concept of Tantric mating:

These people in this village are Vanamargis, or left-hand worshipers known as Tantrics. Their complete worship of sex and the active female principle in the world is not easily understood by ascetics. You from the West believe that the only final way to reach God is in the renunciation of life, or in a Christ-like detachment. This is understood by Hindus, too. Hence many forms of yoga seek God through self-abasement. This is the right-hand path, which denies the world. The left-hand path embraces the world. You might call the right-hand path the male principle, the left-hand path the female principle. In China our Buddhist friends call this the Yang and the Yin. But there are many ways to reach Atman. All paths converge. The Sakta principle, which attributes all things in the universe to an active feminine drive, the feminine principle, absorbing the male, containing it, is more acceptable to us in the East because it is compassionate . . . something a society based on male dominance can never be.

Sundari goes on to explain in detail maithuna, the Tantric method of achieving nirvana during sexual intercourse. Later in the novel Yale Marratt develops a proselytizing foundation called Challenge Inc., and with ten commandments proposes that man is God, and that we should be taught to challenge

and excoriate any concepts that deny the divinity of man. The other commandments of Challenge are more humanistically oriented, with the exception of the one that sacramentalizes sexual union.

Despite the word “divinity,” which raises an unanswerable humanist question, shortly after the book was published I received a telegram from a humanist group congratulating me on having written the first humanist novel. Although I had read Corliss Lamont and Paul Blanshard, I was unaware at the time that I was a humanist—though perhaps I wasn’t, since I was guilty of what Paul Kurtz calls the transcendental temptation, which is pervasive in all cultures.

I continue to feel that unless humanism finds a way to embody cosmic consciousness, transcendental feelings, peak experience—call it what you will—into a philosophy that offers a sort of religious humanism then humanists will never be able to marshal the potential of millions of people with a common sense of purpose, or to counteract the dangers of the masses seeking answers in “false theologies of hope.”

All of which brings me back to Shree Rajneesh. Before I discovered the Bhagwan, I had written many novels, including *The Harrad Experiment*, that extol extended sexual intercourse with a loving partner as a way of experiencing a loss of ego. I was delighted that Rajneesh agreed. Man was God and was divine; God was existence as such. All human reality is simply a projection of a single essence—call it divine if you wish.

I can understand how humanists may reject this approach as mystical ontology, but it is not theism or even pantheism. Rajneesh’s beliefs can be restated in terms of modern physics; one recent scientific theory is that the universe is a hologram and any minute part of it is a reflection of the whole. Basically Rajneesh is proposing a nontheological religion of interdependence: “to bind fast,” not to God but to one another. Rajneesh preaches over and over again that God is not a person, God is not a creator. The universe is God without beginning or end. Or, as Ronald Clarke puts it in his 1983 essay: “God is eternal dynamic creativity. He should be likened to a dancer, not a painter. When a painting is finished the painting and the painter are separate, whereas a dancer and a dance are one. God—you—are involved in this world as a dancer is involved in his dance. It’s not you and God. It’s you. Reality is not teleological. It has no ultimate meaning or purpose. It’s all God’s *leela*, his play or dance. Every event is an end in itself. Whatever is sacred has absolute worth.”

It would seem to me that humanists could proclaim a similar point of view because, like Paul Kurtz’s *eupraxophy*, this thinking leads to a nonreligious, naturalistic way of life. Coupled with Rajneesh’s approach to meditation, it gives a focus for joyous human living and loving and escapes the negativism of intellectual humanism. Humanism maintains that “we must live together openly or we will perish together.” To accomplish that we need to incorporate into our “realities” both a sense of play and a sense of mystery.

The underlying theme of my novel *The Byrdwhistle Option* is that we should adopt a new “play ethic” and a philosophy of living whose *raison d’être* is the four L’s: “Loving, Laughing,

Learning, and Ludamus (we are all playing)." In this novel, for the first time since the Bhagwan was deported, I extolled his joyous philosophy of life, though I was unaware that hundreds of thousands of his followers around the world still supported him and that he was actively lecturing and writing.

Fortunately, *The Byrdwhistle Option* made its way to Poona. One of Rajneesh's sannyasins, Ma Prem Hasya (nee Francois Ruddy—a woman with a story-book life of her

Humanists may reject this approach as mystical ontology, but it is not theism or even pantheism. Rajneesh is proposing a nontheological religion of interdependence: "to bind fast," not to God but to one another.

own) had become his international secretary. In December 1988, Hasya sent me a copy of Rajneesh's *The Greatest Challenge*, which not only proves that Rajneesh is a humanist but in which, for the first time, the Bhagwan takes an activist political stance, and in the process puts his finger on the basic problem facing human beings: that there is a need for Nietzsche's "new man and woman," an intelligentsia who can save the world from the vertical invasion of the partially educated masses whose arrival Jose Ortega y Gasset predicted more than fifty years ago. Because Rajneesh is reaching more people than are humanists and Unitarian Universalists together, I think that both of these groups should take note, for in some areas he seems to be offering an activist and growing humanism that could attract millions of people.

Rajneesh begins *The Greatest Challenge*, and possibly a golden future, with a familiar warning: "There is every possibility that there will be no future as far as life is concerned. . . . We are coming closer to a dead-end street. . . . The most alarming fact is that the intelligentsia of the world, the scientists of the world are ignoring the facts. . . . It should be the determination of every intelligent being that we are not going to allow any vested interest to destroy this planet. . . . We have to take a great quantum leap and teach a new generation not to live the way we have lived."

Describing the ecological state of the world, Rajneesh insists that "Interdependence is our reality." Although the sad facts of the world confound him, he maintains that nationalism is out of date, and that we should return to the original dream of the United Nations, which should be "converted from a formal organization into a real World Government" to which "all nations should surrender their arms."

Compare this with the Humanist Manifesto II: "We deplore the division of humankind on nationalistic grounds. We have reached a turning point in human history where the best option is to transcend the limits of national sovereignty and to move toward the building of a world community in which all sectors of the human family can participate."

Next Rajneesh moves on to "One religiousness—a world of individuals. . . . After nations the second greatest disease is religions. . . . Religions have destroyed man's integrity . . .

they have broken man into parts and these parts are continuously fighting each other. . . . All religions are against everything that man can enjoy. It is their vested interest to keep man miserable. . . . Your misery is absolutely needed for the 'other world' to exist."

I resist the temptation to quote this chapter completely. It will delight humanists, most of whom would have to agree that "An authentic religiousness needs no prophets, no saviors, no churches, no pope, no priest, because religiousness is a flowering of the heart."

So first, nations should go; then religions should go. Next Rajneesh identifies the real criminals: priests and politicians. "The politicians and the priests have been constantly working together hand in hand. . . . The politician protects the priest. The priest blesses the politician—and the masses are exploited, their blood is sucked by both." Rajneesh comes down hard on the Vatican. "The pope is continually interfering. He will not allow birth control: It is a sin against God. . . . What kind of God is this who can't see that the earth is overburdened with population?"

We now come to the activist portion of Rajneesh's challenge, which is that we establish a meritocracy and put power in the hands of the intelligentsia:

We have to drop the idea that every man or woman, just because he or she is twenty-one, is capable of choosing who is the right person to decide the fate of nations. . . . My suggestion is that only a person who is at least matriculate, a high school graduate, will be able to vote. His age does not matter. . . . I would like all universities within each state to call a convention of all the eminent intelligentsia. It would include all dimensions of talent, all kinds of people who have shown their caliber. . . . From the national candidates there should be an international convention of all the universities of the world, and all the intelligentsia. . . . They will come together to decide the fate of humanity and to write the first constitution of the world. It will not be American, it will not be Indian. . . . It will not be Chinese—it is simply going to be a constitution of the whole of humanity.

Is this an utopian idea? I think not. The International Humanist and Ethical Union could easily join in such an endeavor, as could many of the religious leaders and educators, to explore the inevitable failure of democracies that fail to recognize the viability of meritocracy.

Rajneesh follows with a program for preparing the people for power, which intrigues me, because in my novels *The Harrad Experiment* and *The Premar Experiments* (which I'm sure the Bhagwan has never read), I proposed a mandatory seminar in human values during the four years of graduate education. Furthermore, in this fictional world, students would live together in a sexually free environment. The Bhagwan doesn't go this far, but his goal is the same:

So I propose two institutes in every university. One institute is for deprogramming. Anyone who gets a graduation certificate will have to get a clearance certificate from the institute, which means that it has deprogrammed you as a Christian, as a Hindu, as a German, as an American, as a

Communist, as a Mohammedan, as a Jew, or whatever trademark you had. It has taken away from you all the rubbish. . . . My religiousness means that you are simply left without a program, without religion, race, caste, or nationality. You are left alone in the world to be yourself—to be an individual.

Rajneesh then goes on to describe the second institute in every university, which would be exclusively devoted to meditation. Unlike the Mahareshi Mahesh Yogi, Rajneesh offers no gimmicks for meditation; in fact, he abhors them. Meditation is very simple. You just sit silently and witness your mind process. Listen to your breathing:

Be a witness, an observer, a watcher; looking at the traffic of your mind. . . . Simply stand aloof, cool, with no condemnations, no evaluations. Once you get the knack of it, it is the most simple thing in the world. In the process of witnessing, you will note that the clouds of thoughts and emotions will slowly start disappearing—you will have a taste of going beyond the body, mind, heart complex. . . . In this state you will have discovered meditation is peace, meditation is joy, meditation is fulfillment.

Rajneesh's theory is that if this kind of educational process were required of every university graduate, we would soon create an intelligentsia that can be trusted with power. "You are being educated," he writes, "in a very subtle silent way and being prepared for power, in such a way that power cannot corrupt you, or that you can misuse it."

In the following chapters, after eliminating the politicians and priests, he emphasizes science and technology, pointing out that when the dimensions of meditation and deprogramming are added, the scientist will not serve death or self-destructive weaponry, "and will learn to discriminate between what helps life and what destroys life."

Rajneesh is "absolutely in favor of birth control and genetic engineering" under the guidance of an international academy of science. But then he proposes a theory of eugenics. "We have to drop the idea that 'I am the father.' We have to create the idea that 'I have chosen the best child,'" he writes. Whether artificial insemination of superior genes is the only scientific way to find the best child is a hairy question. Eugenics, along with Rajneesh's belief that children should be raised communally, will remind many of the nineteenth-century utopian experiments like Oneida and New Harmony, and the short rebirth of interest in communes during the 1960s.

While we may reject his beliefs in these areas, I believe that Western man and woman are already committed to a new kind of eugenics that, for the intelligentsia at least, will eliminate hereditary diseases and children who are mentally or physically unable to cope with the world. In addition, our dependence on day-care is not dissimilar to communal child-raising, and with the disappearance of the nuclear family it may become the only effective way to educate young people. Amusing, to me, is that in my latest novel, *The Oublion Project*, I used artificial insemination and communal education as the basis creating a new elite that will take over the direction of mass man and woman—the superman of Nietzsche's vision, as interpreted by Rajneesh. Thus far numerous publishers have

refused to read the book because, as one editor put it, "most people don't like to deal with these issues."

Rajneesh's sense of humor doesn't help him with the American public, who won't laugh with him but prefer to ridicule him. On January 16, 1989, *Time* magazine reported that Rajneesh no longer wants to be referred to "as Bhagwan (God), and claims he is host to the ascetic soul of Gautama

Rajneesh is critical of all traditional forms of absolutistic morality, which he believes are created to enslave people; he stresses the development of character or conscience.

Buddha. Days later Rajneesh kicked out Gautama, who he said disapproved of his jacuzzi. "Two days are enough," said Rajneesh, "I say goodbye to you." His newest entity is Zorba the Buddha, a pleasure-loving divinity who travels 1200 feet between home and work in a Rolls Royce equipped with TV, fridge and bar." Rajneesh of course has been visualizing a dancing God as a combination of Zorba and Buddha for many years. But those who don't see the twinkle of his eye, or that this kind of publicity is in reality a kind of "better mousetrap" will continue to think of him as crazy like a fox.

In *The Greatest Challenge* Rajneesh also favors the right to die and goes one step further than "The Case for Voluntary Euthanasia" that appears in the Winter 1988/89 issue of *FREE INQUIRY*. I wholeheartedly agree with the Bhagwan when he suggests that "when people have lived enough [that] they desire to be free from their bodies then hospitals should provide a convenient and pleasant death." I believe that humanists are making a great mistake to confine euthanasia as a "right of the terminally ill," since many who have lived into their late eighties or nineties (or even longer) and who are not terminally ill have sunk into lethargy and boredom with living. If a person wishes to leave this life, as many do, he or she should be given the option to do so, terminally ill or not.

Finally, in Part Three of *The Greatest Challenge*, Rajneesh becomes activist and proposes a World Academy of Creative Sciences, Arts, and Consciousness "for all who believe that our beautiful planet and its inhabitants can be saved from self-destruction by cooperative efforts of intelligent people." Rajneesh seeks to use this academy to facilitate change. Whether humanists can, or wish to, align themselves with another organization for the creation of a better world is something, so far as I can discover, that has not yet been proposed in Western humanist circles.

In passing I would suggest to Rajneesh's World Academy that the possibility of realizing Zarathustra's dream of a new man and woman could be easily set in motion at the university level by encouraging educators to offer a commune-type environment. My feeling is that there would be no lack of male and female participants in an off-campus (or even on-campus) communal living environment, and this would create an additional, concurrent form of human value, education, and self-discovery. The humanists of the world had better unite. They have nothing to lose but their inevitable dissolution into the uncaring masses. ●

My Response to Ronald O. Clarke

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

The most fundamental thing to be understood is that personality cannot have a disorder. Personality *is* a disorder. Personality is a disease. In the East, this has been the understanding for thousands of years—that the basic cause of humanity's misery, suffering, and anguish is this so-called personality.

The root of the word "personality" is very significant. It comes from the Greek *persona*, meaning "mask"—the mask worn by an actor in Greek drama. It was a false face, something borrowed to hide your true nature, and that is what your personality is—a false face, a mask, a shell that has been forced on you by your parents, your teachers, your priests, by the vested interests of the society.

Hence, you are always in a dis-ease. You are never at peace with yourself. Your individuality has been crushed. Your being has been cut to conform with a certain idea so that you can fulfill the function society requires of you. Your whole life becomes just a utility: either you are an inspector, or a police commissioner, or a minister—just a function that any robot can do.

All three of the major religions born in India—Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism—agree on this fundamental point: that the personality is the problem, the barrier. Unless humanity can learn to put personality aside, we can never hope to discover the splendor, the treasure that is hidden within ourselves. We will remain phony.

Ronald O. Clarke has to decide. If he is really a professor of religious studies, then he cannot deny the Eastern insight that the personality is a disorder—there is no question of a healthy or unhealthy personality. But if he accepts this idea, then what becomes of his Western psychology? His whole argument that I am suffering from a narcissistic personality disorder is destroyed.

Second, the very idea of being a professor of religious studies is absurd. It is a contradiction in terms. You cannot study religion. That is impossible. Religion is something that happens in your innermost core, at the very center of your being. It is the ultimate subjectivity. Hence, there is no way you can study it. It is you! You can realize it, you can be it, you can delight in it, you can celebrate it, but you cannot study it.

To call oneself a professor of religious studies simply indicates that the person knows nothing of religion. At the most he can be a historian, or perhaps an archaeologist. His concern is with the relics—the dead scriptures, the rotten philosophy, the theology—not with the mystics.

He is not concerned with the truth these mystics have discovered. He has no idea what truth is. How can a man

be truthful if he does not know truth himself? How can he judge?

And this man is not even willing to trust his own judgment. He has to rely on others. Even though he is criticizing me, he does not have the courage to speak from the perspective of a professor of religion. Instead, he borrows from the psychiatrists. Why does he not have the guts to attack me directly—from his own standpoint? Why rely on psychiatrists, who are themselves the most mentally disordered people in the world?

He calls me a narcissist, but if he looks over his shoulder he will see Jesus Christ standing there, who was the greatest narcissist who ever lived.

Now he will be in tremendous difficulty, because he will have to admit that whatever statements I have made are nothing compared to those of Jesus. Jesus' statements are beyond comparison. Alexander the Great, Napoleon, even Narcissus himself looks modest beside Jesus. He cannot be defeated.

Jesus declares, over and over, "I am the only begotten son of God." There is no possibility of salvation except through Jesus. There is no hope for humanity except through Jesus. He repeats and repeats—he is totally fanatical about it. Even on the cross, he will not give up the idea that he is the only son of God. And if you do not believe him you will be damned to eternal suffering.

I have never made such statements. No buddha, no one who has attained to ultimate truth, can utter such absurdities. A man who has attained buddhahood sees only a small difference between himself and others—just a very small difference—that he has become awakened, and others are still sleeping, still enjoying beautiful dreams. He does not deny their buddhahood, he does not condemn them, he does not say he is superior to them.

Now, what will this professor do with Jesus? How can he explain the sayings of this crackpot? There is nothing he can say. He is helpless. That is why he has abandoned his own field of knowledge, because if he attacks me on religious grounds, then he has to attack Jesus, too, and then he will be in trouble. Then his job will be in jeopardy. Then the vice chancellor of his university, and the deans, and the people who donate money to the university will all be against him, and his professorship will be finished.

Just to avoid these difficulties, he has turned to psychiatry for help. There were no psychiatrists when Jesus was alive, otherwise he would never have been crucified. He would have been put in a mental asylum—and that would have been the right place for him. A little electroshock therapy and he would

have been cured.

Not long ago, this same Professor Clarke wrote an article in favor of me. He wrote very positively, and was giving lectures about me. Many times he came to the commune in Oregon to see me. But it seems he is being pressured by vested interests—by the American government, by the Christian church, and others—to turn against me.

Really it is a great compliment. It seems I am such a danger to the American society that not even a single professor can be allowed to write in favor of me. But this poor professor must be feeling a little embarrassed to be talking against me.

To take a definition from a book, as Clarke has done,

is just childish, amateur. There is nothing scholarly in it. A real psychiatrist knows that, before making his diagnosis, he will have to spend many hours with his patient, listening to his problems, his dreams, his ideas about himself.

And to take my statements out of their original context, and use them to prove that the definition is true, is just cunningness. Any third-rate journalist can do it. Clarke has exposed his own mind. He has not said anything about me.

Religion is like a mirror. If a child is facing it, it reflects the child; if an old man is facing it, it reflects the old man, and if a foolish professor is facing it, what can it do? It cannot lie. It cannot deceive. It has to reflect his foolishness. •

Rajneesh and Rimmer Take a Drive

Robert Basil

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh's response to Ronald O. Clarke is typical of the guru's writings: It is both clever and disingenuous.

The bulk of it, of course, is an ad hominem attack. He brands Clarke a coward, and he dismisses psychology as a sham. The truth of these charges, or lack thereof, has no bearing on Clarke's key contention. They do not, therefore, warrant serious comment.

In defending himself against Clarke's main charge—that Rajneesh has "a narcissistic personality disorder"—the guru puts in his corner the wisdom of Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism—Eastern religions that do in fact critique the very notion of "personality." But Rajneesh conveniently forgets to add that he has filled volume after volume with biting (and brilliant) attacks on these very religions and the Eastern view of existence in general. This is the kind of sophistry that Clarke noted clearly in his *FREE INQUIRY* article.

In any case, it is easy to appreciate why Rajneesh doesn't go after Clarke's article in an exhaustive way. A point-by-point response regarding matters so personal can feel degrading. He protests that "A real psychiatrist knows that, before making his diagnosis, he will have to spend many hours with his patient, listening to his problems, his dreams, his ideas about himself." A valid point—which does not, however, wholly subvert Clarke's thesis. After all, Rajneesh has written (or dictated) hundreds of books, many of which are autobiographical and go into quite a lot of detail about his problems, his dreams, and his ideas about himself. If

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Rajneesh's private life is not so private, he's brazenly responsible.

Clarke's critique of Rajneesh was remarkable precisely because it was the "enlightened one's" actions and self-descriptions, and *not* his teachings, that were discussed. In that sense, yes, Clarke's critique was a narrow one. On the other hand, it does a lot to explain the disparity between his *FREE INQUIRY* essay and his prior position on Rajneesh and his Oregon commune. His report to the Oregon Committee for the Humanities in 1983 was entitled "The Teachings of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and their Social, Ethical, and Environmental Implications." Here the focus was explicitly on the teachings and *not* the man. Only people who've never heard someone with a "personality disorder" say something wise would find the two essays impossible to reconcile.

So let's turn to Robert Rimmer's defense of Rajneesh, which is more detailed. For all its length, it is astonishing that Rimmer's essay never addresses the main complaints against Rajneesh. He describes the numerous humanistic aspects of the guru's teachings, which are impressive. Not only are Rajneesh's views on religion, God, science, freedom, and sex almost totally in accord with humanistic principles, they are expressed with the kind of grace and humor from which too many humanist luminaries feel themselves exempt. But few people have attacked Rajneesh for his teachings. Rajneesh has been attacked for being a cult leader, for breaking numerous laws of our land, and for being a childish, manipulative, money-grubbing phony. To be sure, some or even all of these allegations might be false, but they seem a hell of a lot stronger when a major defense like Rimmer's cannot even see fit to address them.

Rimmer makes a larger error, this one egregious: He fully endorses Rajneesh's "rule of intelligentsia" crap, the idea that

the so-called uneducated masses have no right to a voice in their government. In his book *On Basic Human Rights*, Rajneesh says that "the days of democracy are over. A new kind of system is needed, based on merit. . . . Meritocracy means that only people who are educated in a certain area should be able to vote in that area. . . . And once you have chosen all [these] people, then these people can choose the president and the prime minister." Does Rimmer remember how such "high standards" were employed in the American South only twenty-five years ago? Who, after all, selects the "intelligentsia" but the "intelligentsia" itself?

Even worse is Rajneesh's idea—with which Rimmer seems to concur—that people should be "deprogrammed" of religion before entering graduate education, and that elected officials should be required to possess certain academic qualifications. This is wickedness, pure and simple. Think how easy it would be to "fail" dissenters—whether they be blacks (in Mississippi), Scots (in London), Mongolians (in Moscow), Jews (just about everywhere, the United States included, earlier in this century), and humanists (in the Middle East, including Israel, where fundamentalist educational institutions already receive preferential governmental treatment). Rimmer calls Rajneesh

a humanist, but he ignores—indeed, *supports*—this blatant repudiation of humanism's basic tenets. Humanism means free dissent, self-determination, tolerance—tolerance of the "religiously programmed" included.

Humanism also means democracy. Rajneesh is correct to note that an uneducated public is more likely to vote stupidly. How can matters of complex technology, which enter into the political domain more and more, be assessed by people who think the Earth is six-thousand years old or that crystals focus "healing energy," or who can't read? The solution is education, not disenfranchisement. I don't want to leave decisions regarding nuclear power, genetic engineering, medical technology, and war to the "experts," thank you very much.

Oh, but how can we trust Rimmer's "uncaring masses"? (Rajneesh's less contemptuous phrase is "ignorant masses.") Take the vote away from all those uncultured, unwashed, uh, "people"—while the Bhagwans and the Rimmers and the rest of the carefully chosen intelligentsia achieve superhumanhood through "extended sexual intercourse" in the back seats of their Rolls Royces.

Give me a break!

Intelligentsia such as Rimmer and Rajneesh envision have been ignoring great minds (and, just as key, the supposedly debased cultures from which they sprang) for millennia.

The questions of Rajneeshpuram and of Rajneesh's deportation are troublesome—and fascinating. According to Frances Fitzgerald, who analyzes Rajneeshpuram in her Pulitzer Prize-winning *Cities on a Hill*, "The Rajneeshee had achieved an extraordinary amount in less than two years . . . the ranch was anything but a spaced-out flower-child operation." Nor was it a potential Jonestown. Still, images of Jonestown were no doubt in the minds of state and federal authorities as they worked to deport Rajneesh. Less so were questions of religious freedom. At the time, humanists should have loudly objected to our government's harassment, its singling out, of an out-of-the-mainstream religious leader.

Rajneesh was eventually deported for "conspiring to evade immigration laws." But how responsible was the Bhagwan for the far more alarming crimes of his chief subordinate, Ma Arand Sheela, who in 1985 was convicted of attempted murder, wiretapping, poisoning, immigration fraud, arson, and causing a salmonella outbreak in a nearby town? Although never implicated in these crimes, it was Rajneesh who said, "Not a single thing happens here [in Rajneeshpuram] which is not known to me." And: "Whatsoever happens here is happening with my knowledge . . . whatsoever happens is happening according to plan, a device. There is some hidden pattern in it. And nobody except me knows what this hidden pattern is." Claims to omniscience served to get his followers to surrender all authority to him (and to validate Clarke's "narcissism" thesis), but they also put the Bhagwan in a bind: If he knew what was going on, he is culpable; if he didn't, he was either deluded or he was lying about his omniscience; and if he was deluded or lying, what kind of "enlightened being" can this guy be anyway? What kind of humanist laureate?



Viewpoints

Abortion or Adoption? The Moral Case Examined

Paul Kurtz

The abortion debate continues to heat up. The U.S. Justice Department has asked the Supreme Court to reverse the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. Operation Rescue marshals thousands of "right-to-lifers" throughout the country, blocking abortion clinics and insisting that abortion is wicked. Abortion foes voice their opinions in the media with increasing frequency and intensity.

Anti-abortionists often claim that adoption is a viable alternative: If a woman does not feel that she can care for a child, they insist, she ought to endure the full term of her pregnancy nonetheless and place the infant up for adoption.

It is difficult to comprehend the adamant belief that the fetus is a person from the moment of conception, and that it must be preserved at all costs, no matter what the consequences to the woman who must bear the child. Many who oppose abortion absolutely do so under all circumstances—even in cases of rape, incest, unwanted pregnancy, a severely handicapped fetus, or a threat to the health of the mother. When the opposition to abortion is based on religious faith, it is often impervious to any kind of rational criticism.

A recent *New York Times*/CBS News poll indicated that the overwhelming majority of those who absolutely oppose abortion in all cases do so on religious grounds.

One might understand the objection to abortion during the third trimester, when the fetus is viable—but this is a red herring, since most abortions are performed in the first trimester. In any case, the Supreme Court, in *Roe v. Wade*, permitted abortion during the first trimester and, under certain circumstances, during the second trimester; antiabortionists would not extend even that right to women.

If a woman does not wish to carry the pregnancy to term, should she nevertheless be compelled to do so? Is it morally justifiable

that she should be forced to have the baby and then give it away? Some people assume that giving an infant up for adoption is a noble deed—but I take issue with this claim on moral grounds. In my view resorting to adoption in most cases is far more immoral than abortion, for the act of procreation and the decision to continue a pregnancy implies some measure of responsibility, and once someone decides to bring a baby into the world, she has a concomitant ethical duty to care for that child after it is born.

It is no doubt the case that from the standpoint of childless couples unable to conceive, adoption can be a source of great joy and love. We applaud those who are willing to adopt parentless children; to them there is a little difference between raising a biological child and raising an adopted one.

The moral issue is not from the standpoint of the adoptive parents, but from that of the women and couples who decide to give their children away, abandoning them to the care of strangers.

During the 1950s and 1960s I taught at several private liberal-arts colleges. In those days contraception was not readily available and abortion was illegal. I remember how difficult it was for students to have abortions. Since I was a professor of ethics, many tearful young women and men sought my advice. In some cases the women did not know who the father was; in others the two young persons were not in love and did not wish to marry; still others were simply terrified of what their parents might say if they found out. Those women who were able to obtain an illegal abortion—and survived it—were grateful. Those who could not were often forced to drop out of college, and then to give the infant up for adoption. It is to be hoped that such children found loving homes, but one should not always assume that this was the case. One can argue that giving a child up for adoption under these circumstances is in some cases morally justified, as there were few options open to

the hapless prospective parents and they were being forced to bring the fetuses to full term.

But for women to be told that they must bear their children today, when abortion is available, is an entirely different matter. I fail to see how avoiding abortion because of religious or moral scruples and then giving up the baby to unknown parents is a morally praiseworthy deed. It seems to me to fly in the face of the common belief that parents should care for their offspring; indeed, other species show us that this is not only the rational thing to do, it is instinctual as well. Even when conception is accidental and unwanted, if one decides not to abort, then one has an obligation to provide for the child that will be created. For the state to again make abortion illegal and to *compel* a woman to bear an unwanted child, knowing full well that she will have to abandon it, is barbaric punishment, and can be a source of great trauma and guilt. I recognize that there are extenuating circumstances in which giving a child up for adoption may be justified. But in most cases it is not justified, particularly where abortion is available. In any case, an estimated one-and-a-half million abortions were performed in the United States last year. There is no guarantee that all of these children could have been placed in loving homes. Surely this does not apply to the many nonwhite or handicapped children who would have been born and who almost certainly would have ended up in institutions or in foster care.

Thus, those who prefer adoption to abortion are, I submit, really defending a greater for a lesser evil. I can see little justification for the claim that the conscious decision to give away a baby is morally justified. Far better, when a woman feels she is unable to care for a child, that she abort the unwanted fetus early.

How Religious Groups Differ
on Abortion

Percent saying abortion should be . . .	Legal as it is now	Legal only certain cases	Not permitted at all
Religion			
All Protestants	44	44	9
Religion very important	34	49	13
Not so important	61	36	1
All Catholics	48	36	13
Religion very important	28	49	22
Not so important	72	22	4

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Swimming Upstream with Salman Rushdie

Gerard Thomas Straub

For the first six months of 1988, I swam against the religious tide that tried to wash televangelist Pat Robertson ashore in our nation's capital—as the president, no less. A former Robertson lieutenant, I penned a book called *Salvation for Sale*. It takes a critical look at both my own spiritual experiences and at the religious broadcasting empire ruled by the sophisticated preacher-turned-politician from Virginia. The most explosive aspects of my message—such as Robertson's endorsement of genocide as an effective means for the elimination of evil—were ignored by the press, and the faithful followers of Robertson vented their rage by sending hateful letters and threatening my life.

One of the biggest international news stories of 1989 has been the turmoil surrounding the publication of a novel that militant Muslims find blasphemous—a crime for which the author has been sentenced to death at the hands of an Islamic lynch mob led by an aging bearded holy man who guarantees instant admittance to heaven to any Muslim killed in the act of murdering the evil writer. The good news for Salman Rushdie is that he won't be visited by any life insurance salesmen.

The publication of my book afforded me fifteen minutes of Warhol-style fame. Not so Salman Rushdie. He had tarnished the image of a long-dead prophet, angered a living ayatollah, ignited deadly riots and touched off a worldwide debate on free speech. Then he headed for seclusion with a two-million-dollar price tag on his head. In the process, he became the best known unread author living today.

Salman Rushdie was born in Bombay, where his father was a wealthy Muslim businessman. While still a schoolboy, Rushdie moved to Britain, where he currently resides as a citizen. While his previous books, including *Midnight's Children*, won him widespread critical acclaim, *The Satanic*

Verses received numerous harsh reviews from critics, who judged it solely on its literary merit rather than its spiritual content. The book is a complex, sprawling, allegorical novel that examines the stresses and transformations of religion and migration. It is not about Islam; it's about metamorphosis. Moreover, it clearly is not antireligious.

The book's main characters—a Bombay movie star and a British-educated radio actor—miraculously are the sole survivors of the terrorist bombing of a jumbo jet flying over England. While falling to the ground, the two men find their identities gradually altering until they become living representations of good and evil, angel and devil. Set in London and Bombay, the fanciful novel recounts the life stories of these two men by interweaving fables, folk-tales, and social commentary.

This book is inspired, though excessive and often confused; it contains numerous Eastern allusions that will be lost on many Western readers. The title refers to an ancient story told about Mohammed, which claims that when the prophet's new monotheistic faith was opposed by the merchants of Mecca, he appeased the populace by making a pact to accept three local deities as angels, whom he called the "daughters of Allah." Later, Mohammed retracts this concession, asserting that Satan put the words into his mouth. The story, which was first reported by two ninth-century Arab historians, is considered blasphemous by Muslims and has been censured by commentators of the Koran. Rushdie resurrects the tale by having Mohammed—renamed "Mohound"—appear to one of the novel's characters in a dream sequence. It was this fictional dream of a fictional character, who happens to be losing his mind, that touched off a worldwide furor.

The problem is that this dream, buried deep within *The Satanic Verses*, depicts Mohammed as momentarily weak, and vulnerable to temptation. In fact, this book might be subtitled *The Last Temptation of Mohammed*; the controversy surrounding it closely parallels that which greeted the recent

Gerard Thomas Straub is the author of Salvation for Sale (Prometheus) and a television producer.

Martin Scorsese film that outraged fundamentalist Christians by presenting a very human Jesus. This issue is even more serious to the devout Muslims, because Mohammed is so revered that the truths he revealed may not be questioned. Even images of him are forbidden, and, as we all now know, the Koran dictates that anyone who defames the prophet must die.

Oddly enough, Mohammed insisted on maintaining his humanity—he believed that he was only the messenger and it was the message that should be revered. Unlike Jesus, Mohammed was not granted divine status, though the text of his revelations was.

According to Rushdie, it is the modern-day fundamentalist leaders of Islam that “have turned Mohammed into a perfect being, his life into a perfect life, his revelation into the unambiguous, clear event it originally was not.” In a statement carried by the *New York Review of Books*, he wrote, “One may not discuss Mohammed as if he were human, with human virtues and weaknesses. One may not discuss the growth of Islam as a historical phenomenon, as an ideology born of its time. These are the taboos against which *The Satanic Verses* has transgressed. . . . It is for this breach of taboo that the novel is being anathematized, fulminated against and set alight.”

Salman Rushdie's book is not history. As an artist, Rushdie has separated himself from the world of facts and limitations and entered into a fictional world where he can create a situation that allows for loftier speculation about and deeper insight into the human condition. For his playful inventiveness Rushdie has been condemned to die. The Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini said, “Even if Rushdie repents and becomes the most pious man of all time, it is incumbent upon every Muslim to employ everything he has, his life and wealth, to send him to hell. If a non-Muslim becomes aware of his whereabouts and has the ability to

execute him faster than a Muslim, it is incumbent upon Muslims to pay a reward or fee for this action.” Rushdie no longer considers himself a Muslim, which has fueled the harsh response, since apostates are viewed by the faithful as being particularly perverse because they know the truth and have rejected it.

It seems fair to assume that the Islamic fundamentalists are using religion for political purposes. Yes, Muslims are upset about the book, but it was the occasionally politically savvy Khomeini who manipulated that negative feeling into positive political gain. Iran had been moving toward moderation, even inching its way toward a more secular regime and seeking closer ties in the West. Clearly, the moderates were gaining control and the radicals needed to respond before it was too late; they did so by turning the *Satanic Verses* controversy into a club that could beat back the moderate advances. By putting a price on Rushdie's head, Khomeini quickly reasserted his personal dominance and reignited the passionate fires of the Islamic revolution that exalt traditional religious principles and condemn Western ideas. He united the people of his nation by providing them with a common enemy. And Salman Rushdie was the perfect enemy: Not only was he a British citizen who renounced his faith and lived in the detested West, he also was a Sunni Muslim—and the bulk of Khomeini's followers are Shiites.

The Christians worship the Bible; the Muslims worship the Koran. Both have used their Sacred Scriptures as licenses to kill more often than they've sought in them inspiration for love and understanding. Words presumed to have come from on high are too frequently used to justify murder. The Bible claims that “In the beginning was the Word.” Wrong. If anything, in the beginning was silence—which is exactly what we need today. We have reached a point in our history—dare I say evolution without running the risk of being stoned—when all faiths, as well as their individual followers, must be judged by their actions, not their words.

There is but one planet earth. And we are one people, different yet the same. We need one another. We must respect—or, at the very least, tolerate—one another. Unfortunately, today we have an abundance of virtually everything but toleration (just witness the rise of teenage interest in the neo-Nazi white supremacist movement). The Christian way, the Muslim way, the Jewish way—or for that matter the American way or the white way—cannot become the only way for every inhabitant of this planet. We

need a human way. Any system of belief or thought that divides us and turns human against human must not become a universal law. For humanity to survive, to become fully human, religion must either die or become personal and private. The public square does not belong to any church, nor does any church have the right to control it. If God is dead, it is not the nonbelievers who have pulled the trigger—it's the followers of religion who did him in.

Rushdie and his characters are caught between two vastly different cultures, two distinctly different ways of viewing the world. *The Satanic Verses* is really about changing, and the consequences of personal transformation. According to the author, “What is being expressed is a discomfort with a plural identity. And what I'm saying to you—and saying in the novel—is that we have got to come to terms with this. We are increasingly becoming a world of migrants, made up of bits and fragments from here, there. We are here. And we have never really left anywhere we have been.”

I once moved from Catholicism to Protestant fundamentalism. Later, I took a side trip to Eastern mysticism. Recently, I made the move from Christianity to humanism, and I feel good about it; but the emotional and psychological toll I paid for the journey was heavy. Salman Rushdie directed his impressive artistic abilities toward exploring the price of such a change.

One of the characters in *The Satanic Verses* says, “Battle lines are being drawn up in India today. Secular versus religious, the light versus the dark. Better you choose which side you are on.” And it is not just in India. The lines are being drawn right here in America—in fact, for some, they are being drawn in their very homes.

The real story behind the headlines transcends the absolute right of free expression and free inquiry for all people (not just for writers). The real story goes beyond a writer's right to offend the sensibilities of the religious; it goes deeper than the cowardice of commerce in the face of terrorist threats. The real story is individual and global survival in a pluralistic society that does not want to surrender its culturally based religious beliefs and prejudices. The old ways don't work, and an acceptable new way has yet to be discovered. It is as if we are all on the *Santa Maria*, navigating uncharted waters, with the Old World behind us and the New World ahead.

The seas are indeed rough, swelled with magical thinking, and they shall remain so for years to come. The calmness of reason seems far beyond the horizon. Yet we must sail on—weary, but hopeful. •

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Social and Economic Development in China

Lin Zixin

Though China is a large country whose population constitutes 21 percent of the world's total, it is also a small country in terms of its gross national product (GNP), which accounts for only 2.1 percent of the world's total. The simultaneous greatness and smallness of the country make the Chinese keenly aware of the responsibility they bear in building a world community in the twenty-first century.

The usual label applied to current Chinese economic policies is the "Four Modernizations." The government intends to turn China into a modern state by the year 2000 through the modernization of industry, agriculture, defense, and science. To achieve this goal, which includes quadrupled production and nearly tripled annual income, the national economy is being increasingly decentralized and the country is turning away from the narrow path of self-reliance that characterized the Maoist era.

After twenty years (1957–1977) of economic and social stagnation, China is ushering in a new period by concentrating on economic development and advancing all-around reform and more open policies.

Reform and openness have not only broken down the rigid economic structure and revitalized the economy, they have also battered down many concepts that have long stifled thinking, emancipating the minds of the people.

Between 1979 and 1987, the GNP, state revenues, and the average income of both urban and rural residents approximately doubled. The overwhelming majority of China's one billion people now have enough food and clothing; jobs have been created on an extensive scale in both urban and rural areas; and the acute and long-lasting shortages of consumer goods have abated.

It appears that China's per capita GNP will surely reach \$1,000 (indexed in 1980) by the end of this century, thus enabling its people to lead fairly comfortable lives.

Lin Zixin is a writer and the editor of Science and Technology Daily, the first to report about the Chinese student rebellion. This article is based on his speech presented at the IHEU Congress in August 1988.

Though it will be more difficult to reach the per capita GNP level of moderately developed nations (about \$4,000) by the middle of the next century, the Chinese have begun to enjoy relative affluence, and modernization is moving along apace.

The Chinese are looking toward the future, and are determined to venture forth boldly to solve the crucial problems that will inevitably arise.

Recently, some Chinese scholars have suggested that the "modernization of concepts" must be added to the Four Modernizations, since the old concepts have become a serious obstacle to reform and open policy.

For example, looking down on commerce and business has been a tradition in China for thousands of years. Many great advances in scientific and technological research have remained on paper or in exhibits; they are not developed into products to meet the market demand simply because people respect the work of academics but belittle efforts to solve specific problems in production and marketing.

It is increasingly necessary to introduce new concepts from abroad. But again, a serious problem arises in that the understanding of foreign societies comes largely from books and from contact with tourists. Blind opposition to everything foreign and the simple-minded labeling of foreign economies as "decaying capitalist ideas" or "bourgeois ways of life" is widespread.

The development of scientific concepts of time, communication, ecology, and so forth must become a priority in China; we must begin science education in childhood. To eliminate poverty we must first eliminate ignorance. Fighting against ignorance, backwardness, and superstition is still our essential task.

Thus, many new policies have to be adopted. But perhaps most important, a new ethics must evolve. People's concepts must change.

For thousands of years, the Chinese have invariably believed that their "Middle Kingdom" is a vast territory richly endowed by nature with abundant resources, that productive forces can be developed rapidly once the superiority of the socialist system

is brought into full play, and that the time lag between China's science and technology levels and those of more advanced nations is only ten to thirty years.

Recent studies belie these assumptions. China's cultivated land, forest, grasslands, and water resources per capita are below the world's average levels, and 60 percent of China's territory consists of mountain and highland areas. China is still in the primary stage of socialism, which will last at least a hundred years. At present, China's productive forces lag far behind those of the developed capitalist countries. For example, a comparison of the ten indices of development—the average number of persons supported by each farmworker, the illiteracy rate, the per capita production of steel, railway and highway mileage, electric energy production, the number of telephones per 1,000 people, the labor distribution between urban and rural areas, and the per capita GNP—show that China is actually about a century behind the United States. Simply acknowledging this backwardness and the difficulties associated with it is a step in the right direction.

For a long time in China, many "socialist principles" believed to be beneficial have actually fettered the growth of production and are not in fact inherently socialist, or are applicable only under certain historical conditions. Conversely, many policies condemned as the "restoration of capitalism" are, under socialist conditions, favorable to the growth of production, commoditization, socialization, and modernization. As a result, a structure of ownership evolved in which undue emphasis was placed on a single form of ownership, and a rigid economic structure took shape, along with a corresponding political structure based on the over-concentration of power. All this seriously hampered the development of the productive forces and of the socialist commodity economy.

People are now realizing that a fully developed commodity economy is an unavoidable stage in the development of the society, that it is not true that a broader scale and a higher level of socialist ownership is better, that the principal form of distribution according to work performed can be complemented with diverse forms of distribution, and that it is not peculiar to capitalism to expand markets for funds and labor service and to issue stocks and bonds, which can and should be used by socialist economics.

In short, whether or not the expansion of the productive forces is served should become the basic criterion for judging all

of our work, and the historical idealism should be discarded that deals with socialism in abstract terms without any consideration of actual outcome.

During the period of social and economic stagnation, Chinese leaders advanced many impractical slogans: "We can surpass the U.K. and catch up with the U.S. in fifteen years"; "We can catch up with the world's advanced science and technology in a short time"; and "Within this century we can accomplish overall modernization in agriculture, industry, national defense, science, and technology so that our national economy will stand in the forefront of the world."

One slogan they forgot, however, was "Haste makes waste."

The consequence of impatience was the economic catastrophe of Mao's "Great Leap Forward," an ambitious plan embarked upon in the 1950s to transform China into a developed nation practically overnight. Moreover, this splendid long-range plan greatly enhanced people's expectations, and its failure caused widespread lack of faith in the government.

In the 1970s Chairman Deng Xiaoping set more realistic goals for China to achieve by the end of this century and by the middle of the next century. This has had a sobering effect on the Chinese people. However, great efforts must still be made to reverse the trend of impatience for quick results and of excessive expectations for the improvement of the standard of life.

China's practice of "eating in the canteen the same as everyone else" has brought up many sluggards; moreover, the "extensive employment" that distributes the work of three people among five or even ten allows many to idle away their time. The resulting low grade of service and poor quality of workmanship have aroused widespread dissatisfaction. The long-term emphasis on "class struggle as the key link" has terribly impaired the mutual trust, aid, and unity of the people. Although we often call an organization "one big family," it becomes a knotty problem to maintain this atmosphere and still foster hard work and professional ethics. It would be helpful to introduce the concept of competition and to reform the

personnel system in China.

Mutual aid has been a traditional moral excellence of the Chinese. But for a period of time even this humanitarianism posed an unexpected problem. Now people are beginning to realize that without humanitarianism we cannot begin to develop a working concept of socialism.

There are 40 to 50 million handicapped people throughout China. In the past decade, the Chinese Association for the Deaf, Mutes, and the Blind (CADMB) has been allowed to resume its activities, and two other organizations have been set up as well. The employment, education, and rehabilitation of the handicapped have been expanded with the support of the government and other social organizations. International contacts among organizations of the handicapped have also increased.

All this shows that socialism has opened up the way to a bright future for humanitarianism—for the socialist system requires that people understand, respect, care for, and help others, and consider them equals in the struggle for social progress. •

The Marriage of Church and State in Ireland

Wendy M. Grossman

In the Name of the Most Holy Trinity, from Whom all authority and to Whom, as our final end, all actions both of men and states must be referred, we, the people of Eire, humbly acknowledging all our obligations to our Divine Lord, Jesus Christ . . . do hereby adopt, enact, and give to ourselves this Constitution.

—from the Preamble to the Irish Constitution

Ireland," says Dick Spicer, "is the only country where Falwell's Moral Majority platform has been adopted in its entirety." Spicer is the secretary of Ireland's year-old Campaign to Separate Church and State (CSCS); he calls Ireland "an odious beacon of reaction." In the 1981 census, 93 percent of Ireland's 3,443,405 citizens declared their affiliation to the Catholic church. Although surveys show a drift away from the church's teachings, the Catholic hierarchy claims that Ireland's mass attendance is the highest in

the world. In a July 1987 survey, 68 percent of all respondents went to church at least once a week—80 percent in rural areas. A November 1986 survey showed higher figures: 81 percent overall and a peak of 93 percent among people aged fifty to sixty-four.¹

Attending mass is a personal choice. Living by the laws of the state is less so, and Catholic morality governs the lives of most Irish citizens. The Irish Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and freedom from unwanted religious education, and prohibits the endowment of any church. Yet it is known that the Constitution was written in close consultation with the Vatican. It prohibits divorce: "No law shall be enacted providing for the grant of a dissolution of marriage" (Article 41, Section 3.2). It provides for censorship: "The publication or utterance of blasphemous, seditious, or indecent matter is an offence which shall be punishable in accordance with law" (40, 6.1.i). In 1983, it was amended to acknowledge the "right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life

of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right" (40, 3). In other Falwell-style legislation, male homosexuality is illegal; female homosexuality does not officially exist. In November 1988, Senator David Norris, Ireland's only openly gay politician, won a ruling from the European Parliament stating that laws prohibiting homosexual contact contravene the European Convention on Human Rights. Since Ireland has agreed to be bound by the European Court's decisions, it must now rewrite its laws.

If freedom of religion is limited, freedom from religion is even more so. Constitutional guarantees cannot protect a country from such a widely supported church, or from the politicians it has taught since childhood. So the church has been able to assume many state powers unopposed. The following are some of the worst affected.

Education

Schools are state-funded, but almost all are Catholic owned and operated; about 5 percent are Protestant (Church of Ireland), one is Jewish, and about ten are independent. In general, Protestant schools are liberal and secular. The older Catholic curriculum separated religious and academic studies. But the "integrated" curriculum, in operation since 1972, makes it effectively impossible for parents to withdraw their children from

Wendy M. Grossman is a writer and folksinger living in Ireland. She founded the British & Irish Skeptic.

religious education. Catholics have control over the hiring and firing of teachers, and Catholic schools routinely demand to see certificates of baptism before admitting pupils. The unbaptized may be refused admission. In many rural areas this leaves no alternative except to educate children at home. Because the laws governing education are not published, it is extremely difficult to get a clear picture of educational policy. The CSCS opposes this secrecy, and contends that discriminatory state funding of Catholic schools is unconstitutional endowment of the church.

"The sister would interrupt the lesson and say, 'Hands up, who are the three people in hell,' and all the hands would go up," says the Irish author Sean MacMathuna of his school days in County Kerry during the 1940s. "The three were Martin Luther, Cromwell, and Queen Elizabeth I." (Luther founded Protestantism, and Cromwell and Queen Elizabeth I forcibly brought it to Ireland.)

Health

Hospitals are state-funded but not necessarily state-owned, or Health Board; most are Catholic or voluntary. Though Health Board hospitals are nominally secular, their Ethics Committees are frequently Catholic-controlled; thus, birth control is often difficult to obtain. Kerry's Health Board hospital's family planning clinic does not stock condoms, though during the 1950s and 1960s, the high standard of quality control for condoms made them very useful in timing devices for Northern Irish bombs. Further, the treatments a patient receives may be determined by the orthodoxy of the staff, a particular worry for pregnant women. Even though sterilization operations are not illegal, ethics committees may refuse permission, and even if it is granted, nurses may refuse to assist. Similarly, pharmacists may follow their consciences in deciding whether or not to stock over-the-counter birth control. In a rural area, this may leave you stranded. Early in 1988, the High Court upheld a decision prohibiting Family Planning and other clinics (specifically, the Well Woman Clinic) from giving patients information about abortion clinics in Britain.

Both major churches objected to the Minister of Health's proposed AIDS-information package; it might seem to promote promiscuity, homosexuality, or drug abuse. Further, the Catholic hierarchy opposed any promotion of the use of condoms.² Ireland's AIDS cases are mostly found among drug users, and in December 1988, the Eastern Health Board announced a new program for people with AIDS to

exchange used needles for new ones and receive condoms while attending one-on-one counseling sessions. The announcement stressed that the heart of this program will be counseling, and the Minister for Health commented that "A liberal distribution of needles and condoms [to drug-users at risk] has, in my view, nothing to recommend it."³

Employment

Teacher-training colleges and nursing colleges are church-owned. There is one Protestant teacher-training college, and a Protestant hospital that is being shut down runs a nurses' training program. The rest of these facilities are Catholic, and prospective students may be required to produce character references from their parish priests. Further, religious orthodoxy may affect their chances of being hired after graduation and later of being promoted.

In 1984, Eileen Flynn, a County Wexford teacher, was fired for living with and having a child with a pub-owner whose wife had left him (divorce is not allowed in Ireland). She appealed the decision, but the court agreed that her behavior was inappropriate for a teacher in a convent school.

Death

Most cemeteries are church-owned, but there are municipal cemeteries near Dublin, and cremation poses no problem. The Catholicization of the 1985 funerals of three prominent atheists (the writer Liam O'Flaherty, the singer Lew Kelly, and the activist Dennis Dennehy) inspired a Campaign for Non-Religious Funerals, which published samples of legally acceptable wills to ensure an atheist's burial according to his or her wishes. At Dennehy's secular funeral, a priest jumped up to commend Dennehy's soul to the care of the angels.

Family

No divorce (reaffirmed in a 1986 referendum). No abortion (confirmed in a bitterly contested constitutional amendment in 1983). No legal framework for a separation of property division (although a bill for this is currently awaiting action from the Parliament, or Dail). The Divorce Action Group, founded in the early 1980s, found it difficult to counter the economic and religious arguments used against the 1986 divorce proposals. Women were told that they would lose their child benefits and that their children would lose their succession rights following divorce; Catholics were encouraged to attend prayer vigils the night

before the vote to receive divine guidance: "the curate . . . said . . . they all had their consciences and they knew what was right and wrong."⁴

One man told me that Irish men treat their families better than British or American men simply because there is no divorce. "Irish family life," he said, "is special."

Censorship

Currently banned books include *The Joy of Sex*. The censor allowed *The Last Temptation of Christ* to be shown without cuts provided that disclaimers from the director, Martin Scorsese, and the writer, Nikos Katzantzakis, were displayed outside the theater and that no one be admitted after the same disclaimers appeared on screen. The 1980 ban on Monty Python's *Life of Brian* made it an underground video hit. Over protests from the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL), the Dail is about to pass a videocassette licensing act that grants the censor extremely wide discretionary powers.

Early in 1988, ICCL member Anne Spicer complained to the censor that the Bible ought to be banned because it contains blatant and unacceptable scenes of sex and violence. Amid widespread media coverage, the censor refused to ban the Book.

Politics, nationalism, and the North

Northern Ireland has a population of about a million, three-quarters of which is Protestant. What is frequently not understood outside of Britain and Ireland is that those 750,000 people want to be British citizens, and they want British troops to protect them from takeover by the Catholic government of Dublin, which they perceive to be hostile. This division goes back to the twelfth century. While the Irish constitution expresses a commitment to the reunification of Ireland, a real lesson taught by the failure of the 1986 divorce referendum is that the Republic is not willing to take many steps toward a civil government that would be acceptable to both sections of the island's population.

In 1983, much publicity surrounded the proposed abortion referendum. The Irish Republican Army's *Republican News* ran a front-page announcement in support of the right-to-life amendment. Surrounded by bouncing babies, the headline read: "Abortion is murder."

This summary is limited by the fact that, as Prohibition showed in the United States, a country may have a social and cultural life independent of the law. I spoke with Dave Alvey, the editor of *Church and*

State, who put it this way: "The thing about Irish Catholicism is that it's 10 percent religious and 90 percent social. That's the reason they're so terrified that if there's a liberal precedent set it will all collapse like a house of cards."

Many young people do drift away from the church. But the social pressure can be intense from employers and especially from their families if and when these young people decide to marry and have children. Even if a couple wants a civil ceremony, the family is likely to press for a church wedding. If the couple gives in, they will be sent to the parish priest for a lecture. When and if children are born, the pressure becomes even more intense—for baptism, for moral education, for Confirmation, for First Communion. Even the most committed atheists baptize their children to avoid their being ghettoized, as in a class or caste system. "Of course I had my children baptized," one prominent atheist told me. "I would never dream of making my children pay for my social dissidence."

The welfare structure supports this social pressure. In a recent radio broadcast, an unemployed Dubliner complained bitterly that he could not get a grant to buy his children coats because he was an atheist. Had he professed Catholic beliefs, the state would have given him a grant to buy clothes—including coats—for First Confession or Communion. To be an atheist in Ireland is to be in constant rebellion.

These mores have bred hypocrisy. Many people feel it is not worth spending their energy fighting a monolithic system, and so they make practical decisions that involve lying, compromising their beliefs, or hiding

their activities. This leads to societal schizophrenia. Homosexuality is illegal, and Senator Norris is gay; the Hirschfeld Centre for homosexuals remains open and the Dail recently voted it National Lottery funds for remodeling.⁵ Some argue that Senator Norris may have harmed Irish homosexuals by taking his case to the European Parliament: if the laws are rewritten, they may be enforced. The media does not report on the private lives of the politicians who promote Catholic morality. The 1986 divorce referendum was defeated, and 70,000 Irish marriages have broken down.⁶ The right-to-life amendment succeeded, the Well Woman clinic was shut down, and each year thousands of Irish women go to Britain for abortions.

"Liberalism is only just finding its feet in Ireland," says Dave Alvey. The CSCS was founded in 1987, and has about a hundred members. The ICCL was founded in 1976, underwent a dormant period, and is now being reorganized under the new leadership of Tom Cooney, a law professor at University College, Dublin. Even after twenty years, the 120-member Divorce Action Group has no social or political power. But the groups derive hope from the fact that 30 percent of the Irish population voted for the 1986 divorce referendum, and against the 1983 abortion amendment.

"All the liberals in Dublin will be there," Dick Spicer once said of a CSCS meeting, "which means there'll be about ten of us." There were eight.

Notes

1. Survey by IMS for *Sunday Indo*, July 8–17, 1987, and by IMS for *Sunday Independent*, November 17–27, 1986. Survey information com-

plied by and provided by the Campaign to Separate Church and State.

2. Jonathan Philbin Bowman, "Safe Sex and the Banana Republic," *In Dublin*, April 2, 1987. This article criticized the government for its anti-condom stand, published information about AIDS, and reprinted a consumer survey of different types of condoms from London's *City Limits* magazine. Dublin's Virgin Megastore, which carries records, tapes, and related items, now has a condom counter open every day. Radio Telefis Eireann (RTE) broadcast a series of AIDS programs in the spring of 1988, BBC programs reach most of Ireland via cable, and posters warning of the risk of HIV infection from dirty needles and casual sex are now displayed in bus shelters, shopping centers, and train stations. They do not mention condoms.

3. "Aid for Outreach," *Irish Times*, December 17, 1988.

4. Tim Pat Coogan, *Disillusioned Decades: Ireland 1966–87* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), pp. 105–106.

5. Reported in "Mister Ten Percent" in *In Dublin*, November 10, 1988.

6. Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922–1985* (London: Fontana, 1985), p. 349.

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Separation of Church and State in Western Europe

Oldrich Andrysek

The position of nonbelievers varies greatly from country to country. One of the goals set by the Council of Europe when it was established some thirty years ago was the building of Europe by means of "equality of opportunity, justice, the

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realization of human rights and social progress combined with maximum personal liberty."

Each of the twenty-two member states has highly developed industry, a correspondingly high standard of living, and deeply rooted pluralistic democratic traditions committed to the rule of law.¹ Each also boasts a highly developed human-rights protection system set up under the European Convention on Human Rights (also known

as the 1950 Treaty of Rome).

The conventions that entered into force in 1953 instituted an unprecedented international guarantee for basic rights and freedoms, and covered most of the civil and political rights enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.

While very similar, no two Western European countries are identical in their treatment of religious issues and church-state relations. In many cases the situation differs widely even within a country, with different laws applying to the various regions under the state's jurisdiction.

Even a brief inspection of the situation shows that wide approaches to the question exist. Next to the established (state) churches of England, Scotland, and most Scandinavian countries, we may observe the implementation of Concordats with the

Holy See (as in Italy and the Federal Republic of Germany) or countries that have separate church-state issues by law (the Netherlands and France). The states that adhere to the separation principle are in the minority, and alarmingly, the principle has recently come under constant attack and is being openly and covertly eroded (as we see in France, for instance).

Naturally, international law reflects national legal systems and permits such arrangements and subsequent diversity. Unfortunately, the conclusions that we can draw from the situation in Western Europe are far from comforting.

In the struggle for true recognition of their rights, humanists must take the only way open to them and claim what is rightfully theirs by invoking laws that to a greater or lesser degree protect their freedom of—or from—religion. Naturally this can be confusing, as a humanist is a rational being who does not believe in or worship a god. The Latin word *religio*, which means fear of and reverence for the gods, says it all. I believe that matters of such importance should be clarified, and that one of the decisive traits of humanists is that they are not religious.

Existing legislation protects active forms of freedom of religion; that is, the right to worship, observe, practice, manifest, profess, or change one's religion. Needless to say, such wording offers great doubts as to the effectiveness of protection afforded to individuals who do not adhere to any given religion.

In their legislative and administrative practices, many states clearly or tacitly presuppose that everyone within their jurisdiction is religious. This is proved by the wording of the relevant legal and administrative provisions and by numerous examples in everyday practice. For example, the case of a convicted drunken driver in the state of Maryland parallels many situations in Western Europe. His sentence of twenty days in jail was suspended under the condition that he be placed on probation and attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings during that time. The person involved just happens to be a professed atheist, and AA meetings are loaded with references to God, a "Higher Power," or "A power greater than ourselves."

What are a person's rights in such a case? What about those who do not believe? Are their rights protected by the same provisions of law as those that protect the freedom of religion? Jurisprudence tends to maintain that they are. If an individual has the right to worship, by argument *à*

contrario the same individual has the corresponding right not to worship. Further, the interpretation of various terms—such as thought and conscience—provide us with some leeway in how to handle the rights of nonbelievers.

The rights of nonbelievers should be protected in explicit terms and quite unequivocally, as are the rights of believers. I consider that to be the only way that the existing potential for discrimination—not only for nonbelievers, but also for religious people—finally can be done away with.

Further, there exists in Western Europe a high level of complacency with regard to the level of protection of human rights. This is true in political, legal, and administrative spheres, as well as among scholars and jurists. The prevailing opinion is that infringements on nonbeliever rights are so marginal, insignificant, or even nonexistent that there is no need for alarm, let alone changes in law.

According to Swedish law, for instance, religious lessons sponsored by the state church are compulsory and an exemption may be granted only if (1) the parents wish so and (2) "provided that the pupil belongs to a religious community which has obtained the permission of the Government to arrange for religious education as a substitute for the school." In other words, the situation is truly pathetic; atheists hardly ever belong to a recognized church that is considered capable of providing religious education.

In defense of compulsory religious education one often hears the argument that the history, values, morals, and ethics of the state are so closely linked to the Christian way of life that the curriculum must integrate or at least reflect religious teachings in order to bring up the youth in love for their country. But in this day and age, with mass movements of people across borders, rapid telecommunications, and weapons of mass destruction, this argument and others like it are so shallow that they just cannot stand up to critical scrutiny.

While the numbers of nonbelievers swell (again linked to the overall progress mankind is experiencing), subtle or open aversion to atheism is growing. In some cases, nonbelievers and humanists are even portrayed as presenting a threat to the very moral fiber of the societies we live in (for instance, in the abortion issue, humanists are called antilife or even murderers). Such forces have organizational structures and finances that humanists unfortunately cannot match.

Examples abound of efforts to smuggle

religion into our lives, often through ingenious methods. Since the 1950s, every U.S. paper bill bears the words "In God we trust." Do *we*? In Great Britain, the Royal Post Service added the text "Jesus saves" to every letter to be stamped (for a price, of course). Classrooms in Italy are equipped with crosses.

Our societies are being polarized. Tolerance is suffering and civil strife is a real threat. Though the number of churchgoers is declining and the number of atheists growing, there are some very disturbing signs as well. For instance, fundamentalism and religion-based movements or sects are on the rise. This calls for urgent action.

Considering these facts and that nonbelievers face a variety of real problems in areas ranging from intolerance to discrimination, from religious tax laws to blasphemy proceedings, and from family laws to education, action is more than timely.

Certain avenues could be followed in order to ensure that rights of nonbelievers would be truly guaranteed. First, human(ist) rights must receive more than the lip service they seem to be getting now.

Assuming that humanists by their very nature are not indifferent to life around them, we must mobilize our own interest in the issue and subsequently make a concerted effort to awaken the public to the dangers lurking in religious meddling into state affairs. Each humanist and each humanist organization have a role to play in this regard according to the situation in the country concerned. Only then can the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) step in and coordinate such actions. Working in isolation within the narrow constraints of one's country would be very ineffective. Here we should be prepared to take lessons from bodies like the World Council of Churches or even the Vatican.

Humanists need some serious scientific analysis in this field. The IHEU is perfectly suited to coordinate such efforts. I strongly recommend that we embark on a project that would on a systematic, country by country basis report on the situation between state and church in all the relevant fields.

Note

1. The member states of the Council of Europe include Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. •

Books

Paradox Lost and Regained

Roy P. Fairfield

Fire in the Crucible: The Alchemy of Creative Genius, by John Briggs (New York: St. Martin's, 1988) 382 pp., \$18.95 cloth.

The Key to Genius: Manic-Depression and the Creative Life, by D. Jablow Hershman and Julian Lieb (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1988) 220 pp., \$19.95 cloth.

What a pair of books! Using the language and symbols of alchemy to establish some fascinating parallels between the geniuses of many historical periods, Briggs makes a wide-ranging analysis of creativity in every nameable field, from anatomy and evolution to science and zoology. Using the language and constructs of psychology and psychiatry, Lieb and Hershman not only discuss the characteristics of the manic-depressive in both empirical and theoretical terms, but they also make in-depth analyses demonstrating wherein Newton, Beethoven, Dickens, and Van Gogh manifest such characteristics. Both books—best read in tandem in a short period—might well have carried the subtitle, “The Importance of Being Manic.” Also, both books go far in demythologizing

folk wisdom about geniuses and creative artists—for instance, that they must suffer while creating or inevitably reflect psychopathological symptoms.

Briggs's book is by far the more wide-ranging. Just as Hawthorne regarded *Moby Dick* as “a sourcebook of plentitude,” this book may be similarly regarded by those studying or writing in this field. In fact, Briggs reflects a touch of genius himself in examining the ways in which geniuses in fields as diverse as Einstein's and Virginia Woolf's usually pursue a theme, with all its nuances, from early life, until their work culminates in an endeavor gaining worldwide recognition. Also, using the tools and data of contemporary brain/mind research, he focuses upon ambivalence, omnivalence, simultaneous opposites, eidetic imagery, and internal dissonance as processes leading to creative results. In addition, he notes that amorphous inner vision, thinking oppositionally, the centrality of illusion, and idiosyncratic tactics of thought are means that geniuses employ to express those multiple angles of vision or skills that the world perceives as genius and/or creativity. Experienced in and fascinated with both the verbal and graphic arts, Briggs enthusiastically endorses the notion that “the great artist reinvents the universe with each creation.”

The authors of both of these books on genius and creativity focus sharply on Beethoven, perhaps because he reflected “simultaneous brashness and introversion” as well as “torrents of ambivalence,” which are among the paradoxes they discuss; hence my suggestion embodied in the title of this review. They encourage readers to rediscover the nature and value of paradoxes, which, indeed, are frequently lost in this society.

Fire in the Crucible is a valuable book for any layperson searching for insight into his or her own propensities toward genius. In fact, if we could encourage every teacher in the world to take one single page (157)

seriously, it would help them to recognize and honor the many kinds of intelligence that their students manifest, and our so-called purveyors of knowledge and wisdom would be less inclined to stereotype their charges and might open many young minds. But the book has also profound implications for professionals in every field, both as to theory and application: Historians might depend less upon regressive causation. Psychologists and heuristic learners would take heart from the fact that genius is unpredictable.

Lieb and Hershman have assembled an impressive list of the pathological symptoms of the manic-depressive, and have correlated the patterns that geniuses of this description manifest (for example, moving furniture, claiming poverty no matter their wealth, drinking excessively, periodically increasing sexual activity, and so on); they indicate the value of manic periods in the lives of their major biographees. Mania may, indeed, generate “fertile periods.” In fact, sensitive readers may find many illustrations of creative moments in their own lives as well as some warnings about the ups and downs of creativity and depression. The authors offer no formula, however, for flattening the roller-coaster rides. One message is clear: there is risk when engaging in creative endeavors of any kind . . . even the creative reading of these books.

In my judgment, the value of any book often hinges on the questions it leaves. A few of the questions left by these books are: Is talent distinguishable from intensity and passion? Is genius more useful than labor and diligence? Can creators escape restlessness as they approach problems and the future with omnivalence? What is the value of ambiguity? What are the correlations between genius and being first-born? Between genius and the early loss of a parent? And do manic-depressives appear, indeed, in family clusters? What are the relationships between absorption, childlike innocence, and genius? Will the world gain more from lone geniuses or from those working in collaboration with one another? And what price the use of medication to flatten the manic-depressive humps?

Publishers, industrial and school managers, teachers, and others often demand that writers or inventors come forth with full-bodied outlines of their work before they can be sponsored. May they turn to Briggs's approving quote from a Doctorow vision: “You start writing before you know what you want to write or what it is you're doing.”

Briggs is incredibly modest about his achievement, on which others will no doubt be building for many years. •

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Books in Brief

What the Bible Really Says, edited by Morton Smith and R. Joseph Hoffmann (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1989) 256 pages. \$21.95 cloth. *What the Bible Really Says* examines the Bible's own words regarding a group of topics that have special relevance today. The contributors have been asked to treat topics briefly, clearly. What was requested were "bare statements of the bare facts, presented as far as possible by quotations of the essential texts, with . . . neither exegesis nor moral judgments. The texts should speak for themselves." Footnotes and bibliographies are kept to a minimum, and for translations, the contributors were left free to use standard versions or make their own. Many have done both. The result is a collection of thirteen essays that show the Bible's position on topics such as government, intolerance, capital punishment, women, and wealth. The essays are not interpretations, nor are they literary criticisms. What the Bible *says* is the focus—not how it is written or what it means. With few exceptions, the contributors manage to avoid coloring the text with their own con-

victions, making this a refreshingly different antidote to misrepresentative interpretations of the Bible. (Brent Bailey)

Can We Teach Ethics? by Howard R. Radest (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989). 150 pages. \$35.95 cloth. Howard Radest, a longtime activist in the humanist movement and director of the Ethical Culture/Fieldston Schools of New York, has written an intriguing examination of the field of moral education. In his view, too much emphasis has been placed upon abstract and austere dialectics, and not enough work has been done on the role of interplay among persons. As the pressures of the modern world grow increasingly incessant and the tried-and-true virtues of old no longer seem applicable, the cry for moral education grows louder. But can virtue itself be taught, especially in a pluralistic society like ours, where the values students bring to the classroom are often quite dissimilar? Radest discusses various curricula for meeting this challenge, and demonstrates the real need for critical thinking courses in today's schools. Instruc-

tion in ethics, as Radest ably shows, is not a simple task—but, for the good of the individual and of society as a whole, it is nonetheless vital. (T.M.)

Why Some Therapies Don't Work, by Albert Ellis and Raymond J. Yeager (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1989) 189 pages. \$18.95 cloth. In *Why Some Therapies Don't Work*, Albert Ellis and Raymond J. Yeager explain the techniques and goals of RET—rational emotive therapy—and compare them with those of transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy in a devastating analysis of cult therapy. Contrasting the theories, methods, and results of transpersonal psychotherapy with the RET approach, Ellis and Yeager explain the goals of psychotherapy in terms of human well-being and show how transpersonal psychology can actually increase a person's frustration, intensify neurotic defenses, and impede the development of a healthy self-image. They provide the professional with a valuable resource, but perhaps more important, for the reader with little or no background in psychology, this book can help to explain the dangers of transpersonal psychotherapy. This is especially important today, when millions of people are flocking to "the born-again, hands-on healers, the charismatics, and the out-of-body trippers like Shirley MacLaine," all examples of transpersonal psychologists. (B.B.) ●

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(Letters, continued from p. 6)

today's average American views, say, the Hare Krishnas. The events of the past two-thousand years haven't made Christianity any more rational, but they have made it more respectable. Two hundred years ago, when a few dozen signers of the Declaration of Independence pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, many of them did lose their lives and their fortunes. If a few battles had turned out differently, they would have lost their public honor as well. Their names would not be revered today; they would be obscure, disgraceful footnotes to the history of an empire.

These comparisons are not grandiose. Our nation is in a puritanical mood. When an oil tanker spilled thousands of gallons of oil off the Alaskan coast, our president didn't speak of the need to improve technologies that protect against human error—he advocated mandatory drug-testing. All too many public officials are showing more interest in persecuting the victims of AIDS than in finding a cure. A renewed hue and cry against the unproved dangers of pornography has engendered threats of prosecution to magazine retailers as well as proposals for dangerously vague, sweeping antipornography laws. Thanks to recent judicial appointments, this puritanical mood is likely to be frozen into law for decades to come. Vital freedoms, including freedom of speech and of the press, are at risk.

Given these threatening circumstances, I have an urgent obligation to "Name Withheld"—and everyone whose livelihood isn't endangered by taking action shares this obligation: We must assure that history will make secular humanism "respectable." We must not withhold our names. We should tell people, "I am a secular humanist." Those of us who enjoy expressing opinions with such items should have buttons and bumper stickers bearing the words SECULAR HUMANIST. We must help the millions of people who are secular humanists without knowing it to put a name to their beliefs, and to recognize the necessity of acting on these beliefs. Those of us who shrink from "proselytizing" must learn that that's just another word for "sharing ideas." What could be more respectable?

Molleen Matsumura
Berkeley, Calif.

Calling Ventura County humanists

I would like to know people near me who read FREE INQUIRY. Santa Paula is a very conservative, small town and there are few

like minds as far as I have been able to ascertain. Other towns close to me in Ventura County are Ventura, Oxnard, Camarillo, Newhall, Valencia, and Moorpark. A fast forty miles by freeway is Santa Barbara. It would be very nice to meet people who are as kind as I have found humanists to be.

Helen Williams
Santa Paula, Calif.

Editor's Note: If you live in or near Ventura County and are interested in forming a Secular Humanist Group, please contact Tim Madigan at Box 5, Buffalo, New York, 14215, telephone (716) 834-2921.

Vatican/humanist dialogue

I read with interest Paul Kurtz's article on the Vatican/Humanist Dialogue (Winter 1988/1989). I was not aware of such attempts at dialogue, though I have no doubt that the Vatican is closely watching the humanist movement.

The talks may sometimes be friendly, but we have to remember that there is no possibility of a dialogue with the church, which stands strongly on the principles of Aquinas and maintains that it alone holds the truth. All inquiries must lead to the recognition and acceptance of Catholic doctrines and to the supremacy of the church; therefore there is no possibility of the common denominator of a search together—only conversion. All attempts at ecumenical dialogue have failed—witness the cases of Hans Küng, Charles Curran, and others. The church has never recognized the principle of the separation of church and state or the principles of pluralism and freedom as we know and understand them in the U.S. Constitution and in humanist ethics—and it seems it never will recognize them.

If the church is eager to initiate contact, it is only for the purpose of its own legitimization among humanists. The hierarchy needs such a legitimization to present itself as part of a useful and rightful organization in the modern world. What is not said is that the hierarchy still claims the absolute right to control the conscience and behavior of people and societies. One must know how the church operates and the deeply felt convictions of its leaders to really understand their actions. Pope John Paul II represents the medieval Catholicism that will never hesitate to use any and all available means to increase the domination of the church over people and societies. This is the

essence of Catholicism. I know this from personal experience, having lived for about thirty years in Poland; the country is still dominated by the totalitarian, self-confident, arrogant, medieval Catholicism in its full expression, and even the cosmetic changes of Vatican II have not been accepted.

Unfortunately, the Western world is naive and appeased by the church organization, but the danger is real!

Marian Hillar
Houston, Tex.

More on scientists and religion

There is not the slightest evidence that Einstein was a religious person, contrary to what Hans G. Machel seems to assume (Letters, Fall 1988). Einstein never followed any religious practices, was never a member of any religious organization, was not interested in religious issues, and was, in fact, accused of being an atheist. He once received a telegram from an orthodox rabbi challenging his belief in God, and he is said to have replied, on the advice of his wife, that he believed in the "God of Spinoza"! Spinoza had of course been excommunicated at the age of twenty-three by the Amsterdam synagogue for impiety. Though Einstein sometimes used phrases such as "God does not play dice" or "God is tricky but not malicious," these clearly had oblique meanings quite unrelated to theism.

Almost all well-known nonbelievers have been maligned—if not burned at the stake—and alleged to have held beliefs they in fact rejected. This is true of such men as Leonardo da Vinci, Goethe, Thomas Paine, Voltaire, Beethoven, and Darwin. When the mass media cannot falsify a nonbeliever's lifelong outlook, they will simply ignore him or her and avoid any mention of nonbelief.

Machel's statement that "many first-rate scientists . . . are also religious" is highly dubious. I would like to see a list of such "first-rate scientists." To mention names like Puthoff and Targ in the same breath as Einstein and Darwin, as Machel does, seems injudicious, at the very least. Really great scientists are almost never religious, and are certainly not to be found among conventional believers. Perhaps the only exception that comes to mind here is Isaac Newton.

Finally, it would be well for skeptics to remember W. K. Clifford's admonition: It is wrong, always, everywhere, and for everyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.

Paul Pfalzner
Ottawa, Ontario

Readers' Forum

Growing Toward Unbelief

How did those of you who were previously religious grow toward your present viewpoint?

Until I was twenty years old, I was a born-again Christian. I had accepted literally every word in the Bible. My background involved strict Methodist-oriented indoctrination, which incidentally made me a strict bigot as well. I can clearly recall expecting a black person to step off the sidewalk (in Newark, New Jersey, no less) when passing me! Of course, the use of "the Lord's name in vain" offended me to no end. My religious indoctrination was fortified by attending Hartwick Seminary, where the study of the Bible was mandatory.

The first phase of my complete disenchantment with religion came when I attended college. What happened reminds me of an interesting parable: A priest, walking down the street, came upon a little boy playing with some very tiny kittens. He asked the little boy what kind of kittens they were. The reply was, "They're Catholic kittens, Father." Some three weeks later the same scene repeated itself but this time the little boy replied, "They're agnostic kittens." Somewhat taken aback, the priest asked why the change. The boy answered, "They have their eyes open now."

Two momentous influences took place during my college days. First, I listened to several progressive professors who presented *reason* over mysticism and superstition. Some long-delayed critical thinking took over. The second came when an all-state fullback became my idol and close buddy. We studied together, discussed current events, and became very close. His name sounded German so I assumed he was of German descent. One time I remarked that the college would be much better off if we could only eliminate the Jews. Calmly and with no apparent emotion he said, "I am Jewish!" That stressful moment suddenly revealed how wrong I had been, and drove me further away from a religion that had failed to teach me that bigotry and prejudice are wrong.

From that time on, my convictions grew,

embracing a philosophy that I have since come to recognize as humanism. I have not become an atheist simply because I do not believe that all the evidence is in for acceptance by the human brain.

I conclude by putting forth the concept that, in some instances, human nature *can* change.

Gibson LeRoy
Trenton, N.J.

We often hear it said that everyone must believe in something.

In 1976, my wife and I vacationed in Greece. We took a tour of Athens, and our guide was a Greek woman about twenty-six years of age. When we reached the Acropolis, she told us the story of the magnificent Parthenon and the nearby Erectheum.

It seems that the goddess Athena was a professional virgin, proud of her purity and determined always to remain a virgin. But one of her half-brothers, Hephaestus, the god of iron-workers, had other plans for Athena, and one day he seized the opportunity to force his attentions on her. She fought him off, but in his excitement, he had a premature ejaculation. His semen ran down her leg onto the pile of warm wool beneath her, and through parthenogenesis, a child was born instantly.

Athena took the child home and reared him as her own. She named him, in what must have been the original Freudian slip, Erectheus. In time, he became the warrior-hero of Athens, protecting the city in war as Athena protected it spiritually.

Both eventually died, and monuments were built in their memory—the Parthenon for the virgin and the Erectheum for the warrior.

When she concluded her tale, our guide instructed us to enter the gate to the grounds and to investigate as much as we wished. As the tourists wandered off to do so, she

pulled out a cigarette and sat down on a large boulder. I couldn't resist the opportunity to ask her if modern Greeks gave any credence to such stories.

She instantly became furious, saying, "Sir, you are insulting! Of course we don't believe in such stories! We are not pagans, we are Christians! We know there's only one true God—Jesus Christ, born of the blessed Virgin Mary!"

Well, I don't know what expression my face took, but the second she finished her outburst, she turned red, doubtless realizing the inconsistency of her words. Then, flipping her cigarette to the ground and tossing her hair, she added defiantly, "Well, one must believe in something."

At that moment I became an atheist. I was forced to ask myself *why* one must believe in something, especially something that confounds experience and is based upon the fears and frustrations, the chauvinisms and superstitions of a society long since obsolete. Suddenly I could no longer see the necessity for or the virtue of belief in anything that defies all natural laws and intellectual experience. I cannot agree that one is obligated to believe in something that is supernatural, extraterrestrial, and beyond both reason and evidence.

In short, I came to see religion as a divisive force in the world, a sham to its lukewarm adherents, a crutch to its devout ones. It is a vehicle whereby all manner of inhumane and nefarious acts are excused, a tool whereby the haves keep the have nots in subjection, the opiate of the masses, and the greatest boondoggle of any government, sterile in its rituals and absurd in its theory.

Far from being the source of light and understanding it is claimed to be, I find it to be the greatest deterrent to freedom of inquiry, the staunchest proponent of the status quo, the stultifier, the negator, the very antithesis of intellectual endeavor. It comes between friends and between nations. It leads to war, to torture, to murder, and to vicious and unscrupulous business practices. It preaches love and practices hate; it promises eternal bliss while imposing restriction and encouraging poverty.

But I do believe that in throwing off religion's shackles, I and others who agree with me can one day realize the true virtue of being free men. Not soon; the system, the society, fear and superstition are all stacked against us. But someday, if we persevere, we shall be free.

John P. Densford, Ph.D.
Ada, Okla.

I grew up in what one would call the all-American Christian family. As a child, I was surrounded by Lutherans, Catholics, and Fundamentalists. A motley crew, indeed.

There are three glaring reasons for my self-imposed exile from all those Christian trappings. The first was that my father never went to church, yet he displayed, on a daily basis, all of the common moral decencies. Apparently he didn't learn them in the lap of Christianity.

Second, a deep abiding skeptical nature prevented me from taking the plunge into the dark and purposeless task of giving offerings to any deity. I don't think I ever wanted to believe in God. I have never loved him. Going to church annoyed me.

And last, but not least, at the tender young age of thirteen I came upon Mark Twain's "A Pen Warmed Up In Hell." The title fascinated me. This is not to say that I actually understood what I had read, but I did file the information away to be retrieved in the future. Several years later, I had the good luck of having a friend introduce me to Bertrand Russell's "Why I Am Not A Christian." I shall always treasure the book containing this essay.

My defiance saved me from the shackles of a dark and brooding religious life. I have always felt far more reverent in the library than I ever felt in any church.

Eve Robinson
Harshaw, Wisc.

When I was growing up, I had no idea that I would ever abandon the concepts I had learned as a Methodist. By the 1940s, however, I had already become an atheist, though I didn't realize then how depraved Christians are. My father had been too intelligent and educated to be anything like them.

My skepticism did not begin with any reading of freethought literature. I knew that there were atheists, but I had had no contact with their thinking except through my father's derogatory remarks. Parental encouragement had made me contemplative, and I had taken my school courses seriously. My first year in college I had a course of introduction to the Bible, from which I learned that it was written by human beings. This did not affect my firm assumption that God was the overseer of the universe.

During my second year in college I took psychology. I took many notes and was soon writing out my own interpretations of the data. I gave the problem of good and evil

a high priority, eventually concluding that there is no such thing as either. It became obvious to me that one does what seems best at the moment, and accepts pleasure only when no anxieties prevent this acceptance.

It follows that persecutions for blasphemy and heresy could not be justified even if God required set rituals and doctrines (which I had always doubted). That is, not only was such hatred of "evil" misdirected, it had no excuse at all. While there are many evils, in the secular sense, they are matters that can be rationally approached; they are not rooted in some mysterious morass of compulsion-without-reason. What, then, was I to think of a god who allowed our delusions to continue for thousands of years?

Until reading the pamphlets forced upon me by religious enthusiasts when I was in the army, it never occurred to me to conclude that God was uncaring or tyrannical. My only alternative to the idea of a friendly god was the idea of no god. By my third year of college I was an atheist. I simply considered religion a terrible mistake that humanity had made. The label "agnostic" seemed to be used by those who wanted to temper their self-description; now I realize that there is more of a distinction than that: The atheist thinks in terms of data that negate the conceptions of the religions, while the agnostic acknowledges that we cannot claim to know everything and are perhaps very ignorant in terms of the whole picture. They emphasize different aspects of the same data, although sharing knowledge of them. The atheist is bored by what *could* be true; the agnostic is perhaps bored by science.

Harry E. Mongold
Manhattan, Ill.

I was about fifteen when I became a secular humanist, though I didn't know the term then. I'd been raised in the Catholic and Methodist faiths; but during my mid-teens, whatever "faith" I might have had collapsed under the weight of the sheer absurdity of Christian beliefs. It was clear to me that the evidence supporting Christianity added up to no more than the evidence for the idea that Zeus hurls thunderbolts from the sky or that the universe sits on the back of a turtle—that is, nothing. Only the fact that vast numbers of people around me seemed to believe this stuff gave me pause. Was I missing something? But when I asked myself if mobs could be capable of deluding themselves into believing monstrous un-

truths, I remembered the rise to power of the Nazis in Germany, and had my answer.

When I became an adult, my mother confessed to me that she had been secretly pleased with my decision. She said she hadn't wished to force me into any particular set of beliefs, but had hoped that I would eventually use my intelligence to see through religious dogma.

Over time, I developed a great contempt for religion's role in world history, with its bloody jihads, its burning of heretics, its murder of homosexuals, its enslavement of blacks, its shackling of women, its self-righteous hypocrisy, its deliberate suppression of scientific truth. I now consider religion to be largely a force for evil, and would suggest that the religious check the mirror for the Satan they fear. People are, of course, free to believe what they will, but they are not free to escape the consequences of freely inhaling such poison.

Humanists concede too much to religion in the field of ethics, and too easily. The beginnings of ethical conduct can be found in simple empathy, developed in an even minimally healthy childhood. That religion claims to have created and to sustain ethical behavior is predictable, and just another lie. To do right because one fears the punishment of "hell" isn't ethical, it's simply submission to metaphysical extortion. The ethics of Christianity—which demands that mankind grovel and beg before its blustering deity—stinks to high heaven.

Dan Hagen
Charleston, Ill.

Editor's Note: The Readers' Forum is a new feature in FREE INQUIRY. We want to know your opinions regarding specific issues of interest to humanists. We are still accepting letters about how those of you who were previously religious grew toward your present viewpoint, and also would like to hear from you regarding the following topics:

What children's books have helped you in teaching your children humanist values?

What sort of answer would you give to someone who asks, "What is secular humanism, anyway?"

We welcome your letters on these topics, and encourage you to suggest topics for future Readers' Forums. Please type and double-space all copy. Send to Readers' Forum, Mary Beth Gehrman, editor, P.O. Box 5, Buffalo, New York 14215. •

In the Name of God

This quote is from none other than Adolph Hitler, in his book *Mein Kampf*. He followed through by sentencing to hard labor women who had had abortions. A second offense brought death. (Ben W. Fuson, *The Big Sandy News*)

Living in glass houses

Iranian authorities warned women that they might be punished by up to seventy-four lashes if they wear makeup up, clothes that accentuate body curves, or see-through stockings in public. A notice by the State Security Council printed in Iranian newspapers warned that laws punishing violators of hijab, or Islamic covering, would be strictly enforced beginning April 21. Men also were warned that they should not wear "gaudy clothes."

In a related story, Iranians stoned to death eleven prostitutes or pimps in an Islamic execution watched by thousands of people at a sports stadium. The Iranian newspaper *Kayhan* said the eleven were sentenced to death in Bushehr for running a prostitution network. Dozens of people have been stoned to death since Islamic law was introduced with the 1979 revolution. In execution by stoning, prisoners are hooded and buried in a hole in the ground, men to the waist and women to the chest. Those carrying out the sentence—usually judicial officials or police—stand in a circle around the convict and the sentencing judge throws the first stone. (San Diego Tribune)

Be the first in your yeshiva to collect 'em all

Baltimore—They're more than twice the size of baseball cards, come four to a pack and show faces considerably older than the average sports hero. But even without bubble gum, rabbi cards are the rage among Orthodox Jewish youngsters.

"I used to collect baseball cards," said Meyer Brull, 12. "I gave them up after a while. I gave them to my brother. These are more interesting."

His brother, Yossi, 10, agreed. "They're something different from baseball cards. My teacher used to give out pictures if you were good in class. So I got a lot that way."

Like their counterparts in the baseball world, rabbi cards are collected by youngsters—and some adults—who buy them by the pack and trade to get pictures of all 36 of the Orthodox religious leaders featured thus far. The card back includes the rabbi's place and date of birth, schooling, and other facts in both English and Hebrew. (AP) •

Blasphemy bill

Baton Rouge—One of the Ten Commandments would be enacted into Louisiana law under a bill filed recently by a New Orleans legislator.

The bill by Republican Rep. Garey Forster would make it a misdemeanor for anyone to take the name of God in vain. It also would bar cursing Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, making fun of "the holy word of God contained in holy scripture" or ridiculing the heads of "any generally accepted and recognized religion" and their teachings.

Forster said the proposal calls for up to six months in jail and a fine of \$500 for violators.

He said the bill is designed to punish those who write critically about religion or make movies such as *The Last Temptation of Christ* that treat religious subjects lightly or in an unflattering manner.

Onward Christian advertisers

Detroit—A number of religious groups are creating their own versions of the *Yellow Pages* telephone directories, which exclude business owners who don't belong to the faith, arousing complaints of discrimination.

The *Christian Pages*, for example, follows the usual format of yellow newsprint and black-and-red type.

"The *Christian Pages* directory is designed to assist born-again Christians in locating members of the Body of Christ should you desire to do business with one another," the guide's introduction says.

The welcome invokes Galatians 6:10, which reads "As we therefore have oppor-

tunity, let us do good unto all men, especially those who are of the household of faith."

Advertisers are required to sign a statement of faith in Christ, said Bob Hover, the directory's publisher. Business owners professing other faiths are refused space.

"Anybody who's truly a Christian obviously has very high standards," he said, adding that recent scandals involving evangelists haven't hurt business. "There's an advantage to doing business with a person who truly believes." (New York Daily News)

What do we have for the witnesses, Johnny?

Can Bible Belters find salvation in Sin City? That question was put to delegates to the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting, to be held this year in Las Vegas, the bawdy city that makes a virtue out of vice. The *Greensboro* (N.C.) *News & Record* reported that some delegates hope to convert sinners during the June 13-15 session. "I really think it's a wonderful opportunity for a witness," said the Rev. M.O. Owens from Gastonia, N.C. "If any place in the country needs a witness, it is Las Vegas." (San Diego Tribune)

Achtung!

Anti-abortion militants will doubtless be gratified to learn that in addition to the pope, Reagan and Bush, and Jerry Falwell, they have another stalwart supporter—one of the major national leaders of this century!

He said: "I'll put an end to the idea that a woman's body belongs to her . . . the practice of abortion shall be exterminated with a strong hand."

THE WIZARD OF ID

by Brant Parker and Johnny Hart



Living Without Religion continued

SATURDAY, JULY 29

Sponsored by the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism

9:00 A.M.-12:00 NOON

Concurrent Sessions

Session 1

Humanism and Happiness

Marvin Kohl, Professor of Philosophy, State University of New York College at Fredonia

Joe E. Barnhart, Professor of Philosophy, University of North Texas

Richard Taylor, Leavitt Spencer Professor of Philosophy, Union College

Session 2

Dealing With Death, Grief, and Euthanasia

Verle Muhrer, Instructor in Philosophy, Penn Valley Community College

Thomas Franczyk, Co-Editor, the *Secular Humanist Bulletin*

Gerald Larue

12:00 NOON-2:00 P.M.

Luncheon: Eupraxophy—Ethics Without Religion

Tim Madigan, Executive Editor, *Free Inquiry*

Thomas Flynn, Co-Editor, the *Secular Humanist Bulletin*

2:00 P.M.-3:30 P.M.

Concurrent Sessions

Session 1

Moral Education

Sol Gordon, Professor Emeritus, Syracuse University

Pearl Oliner, Professor of Education, Humboldt State University

Annemarie Roeper, Consultation Service to the Gifted

Session 2

Humanism and Sexuality

Bonnie Bullough, Dean of Nursing, State University of New York College at Buffalo

Vern Bullough

Robert Birle, Chair, Contra Costa County Chapter, Bay Area Network of Gay and Lesbian Educators

Priscilla Alexander, Director, COYOTE, National Task Force on Prostitution

5:30 P.M.-6:30 P.M.

Recital

James Dahlgren, Violinist, San Francisco Opera

7:30 P.M.-10:30 P.M.

Awards Banquet: Humanism and Critical Thinking

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Paul MacCready, President, Aerovironment, Inc.

Philip Mass, Robert G. Ingersoll Memorial Committee; Licensed Clinical Social Worker

Vincent Sarich, Professor of Anthropology, University of California at Berkeley

SUNDAY, JULY 30

9:30 A.M.-12:00 NOON

Enhancing the Humanist Message

CHAIR: Mary Beth Gehrman, Managing Editor, *FREE INQUIRY*

Paul Kurtz

Gerard Straub, author, *Salvation for Sale*

Gerald M. Hampton, Chair, Marketing Department, San Francisco State University School of Business

Tim Madigan, Executive Editor, *FREE INQUIRY*

12:00 NOON-1:00 P.M.

Lunch (on your own)

1:00 P.M.-3:00 P.M.

Workshops

Enhancing Personal Effectiveness, with Philip Mass

Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion, with Gerald Larue

Secular Humanist Societies, with Tim Madigan, National Coordinator

SECULAR ORGANIZATIONS FOR SOBRIETY (SOS):

In conjunction with *FREE INQUIRY*'s Eight Annual Conference, SOS will hold its first national meeting, from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., Sunday, July 30, at the Cathedral Hill Hotel. Workshops will be conducted on how to start an SOS chapter in your area, effective meeting formats, community outreach proposals, and spreading the word about SOS. Speakers will include **Jim Christopher**, Founder and National Director of SOS; **William White, M.D.**, Clinical Director of Priority One, a secular outpatient treatment program; and **Janice Goodall**, Convenor, SOS Northern California. This day-long SOS meeting is free to conference registrants; the fee for those who are not attending the *FREE INQUIRY* conference is \$25.00.

You are cordially invited to attend
FREE INQUIRY's Eighth Annual Conference
Living Without Religion
THE GOOD LIFE VS. THE AFTERLIFE

Religious Views on Life After Death
and the Humanist Response

Thursday, July 27 to Sunday, July 30, 1989
at the Cathedral Hill Hotel, San Francisco, California

THURSDAY, JULY 27

- 7:00 P.M.-9:00 P.M. **Humanism vs. Religion: Two Contrasting Ways of Life**
Paul Kurtz, Professor of Philosophy, State University of New York at Buffalo; Editor, *Free Inquiry*
Gerald Larue, Professor Emeritus, University of Southern California; Chair, Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion

FRIDAY, JULY 28

Sponsored by the Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion

- 9:00 A.M.-12:00 NOON **Eastern Religious Views on the Afterlife**
CHAIR: Gerald Larue
ISLAM: David Powers, Professor of Islamic Studies, Cornell University
HINDUISM: Robert B. Tapp, Professor of Humanities, University of Minnesota
BUDDHISM: Jock Hearn, Zen Buddhist Priest; Clinical Psychologist
- 12:00 NOON-2:00 P.M. **Luncheon: Religion and Politics in the 1990s**
Robert Alley, Professor of Humanities, University of Richmond
- 2:00 P.M.-5:00 P.M. **Western Religious Views on the Afterlife**
CHAIR: R. Joseph Hoffmann, Chair, Department of Philosophy and Religion, Hartwick College
MORMONISM: Vern Bullough, Dean, Natural and Social Sciences, State University of New York College at Buffalo
OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS: Randel Helms, Professor of English, Arizona University
SATANISM AND CULTS: Shawn Carlson, Lawrence Berkeley Labs
- 5:00 P.M.-7:00 P.M. **Dinner (on your own)**
- 7:00 P.M.-9:00 P.M. **Humanism and Humor (optional)**
A visit to the Rose and Thistle Comedy Shop, featuring **Paul Krassner**, Political Satirist and Editor, the *Realist*

(continued on inside cover)



Paul Krassner



Gerald Larue



Vern and Bonnie Bullough



Paul MacCready

For registration information, contact: **Jean Millholland**, FREE INQUIRY, P.O. Box 5, Buffalo, N.Y. 14215
Tel. (716) 834-2921 • FAX (716) 834-0841